



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 141 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, January 30, 2019

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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I'm going to call this meeting to order the 141st meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

We are beginning our study of settlement services across Canada, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2). This is the first meeting.

As is our normal practice, whenever we can, we invite officials from the government to present an overview to get context for the other witnesses that we'll be hearing over the next several weeks as we look at settlement services offered to newcomers in Canada.

Mr. Manicom, thank you and your whole team for joining us.

We have 10 minutes or so for you to give—

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Chairman, before Mr. Manicom begins, I have a point of order arising out of the email on the estimates sent by the clerk and the publication of the in camera proceedings held by the committee on Monday. We talked about the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction being invited to appear before the committee in relation to the study of the supplementary estimates.

My concern, Mr. Chairman, is with the two ministers appearing for one hour and the members of the department of those two ministers appearing for a second hour. I seem to recall that we tried that once before. I think Minister Goodale was here. I think Minister Blair was here when he was first appointed.

If each minister takes 10 minutes to speak, which is normally the custom—and I think they should—and makes introductory comments about the estimates that affect them, then if we're lucky, we would have maybe a first round of questions, which is hardly fair to the members of the committee.

The second issue, Mr. Chairman, is that I believe we should have a meeting with one minister for an hour, another meeting with another minister for an hour, and a meeting with each of the two officials. Each minister would appear alone for one hour, and then, as I say, they'd have an opportunity to make their seven- or 10-minute statements. I can't remember what you allow. Either way, we'd be lucky to get some questions in.

We have to consider the officials from both areas. We would have a pretty big table. We'd have the IRCC, the RCMP, the CBSA and

possibly others. It would make it difficult, Mr. Chairman, to narrow down the questions that we have for their respective areas of responsibility.

We have two related issues here, Mr. Chairman, that we would like to question the ministers on.

The first is securing the border, the issues of Roxham Road and the areas in Manitoba and British Columbia that fall under Minister Blair. We now know there have been over 40,000 illegal border crossers in the last two years, and that would definitely require some detailed questions on the supplementary estimates.

We also have the larger issues surrounding immigration in general, which fall under Minister Hussen. We have questions for him on a whole group of items, including backlogs, parents and grandparents, and on compensating provinces for increased asylum claims. The list is a long one. These are the estimates, after all. Pretty well any topic related to the department is fair game.

The final issue, which relates to the email sent by the clerk—I don't know whether I have it here, so I'll have to go by memory—is that if you look at the calendar setting forth the time frame we have to do the estimates, I think we sit for one week in March. In February I think there's a week that we're not sitting. So time's awasting, Mr. Chairman.

I believe that you and the clerk should set out two two-hour meetings, one for each minister and their respective officials, to go over these quite complicated areas that we would like to have an opportunity to question them on.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you for that. Because it was a point of order, and we would not be able to receive it as a motion to change what the committee decided, we'll take it under advisement. You will be able to bring a motion forward when it is your turn—not on a point of order, but when you have speaking turn. You could bring a motion to do that.

Right now, the committee has invited two ministers to have a meeting on supplementary estimates (B). The custom of this committee is to have a two-hour meeting on the estimates. That is what was decided. Of course, once you have the floor, you are certainly allowed to bring a motion on an item with respect to the business of the meeting. If it's not with respect to the business of the current meeting, you're invited to give notice of motion, and then we could deal with it within 48 hours.

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Chairman, this was a point of order on something that was released by the clerk, clarifying something. I think I have every right to speak on a point of order. It was not a motion. It's a point of order, and I have every right to speak on it now, particularly when I look at the calendar before me. We sit next week. We're off the following week. We don't sit on the 18th, because that's Family Day, so there's only one meeting that week. We sit the following week, and then for the next two weeks, we're not sitting. If you don't do it before then, you'll be out of time. I have every right to do it now.

This wasn't a notice of motion. I'm quite aware of the procedure of notice of motion, and you are too. I have every right to say this is a point of order. This should be ruled on by you—or commented on by you—with respect to setting a timeframe for these ministers. The ministers may not be available, and if you leave it, we may never hear from them.

I have every right to speak on a point of order at this time.

The Chair: You do. The point of order has been heard, and I will refrain from ruling on it. The clerk and I have set a meeting for Monday to discuss the agenda, which I told you I would do. That will be considered when the meeting is held, and we will look at one member's opinion. However, the committee will decide its own agenda. If you're not happy with the schedule we come up with, you'll be entitled to bring a motion at that point.

● (1540)

Mr. David Tilson: At the very least, Mr. Chairman, I believe you—or if not you, the clerk—should inquire from the ministers when they're available. Otherwise, this whole procedure will never take place.

The Chair: We have already proposed three potential meeting days to the ministers. We are waiting to hear back from them.

Mr. David Tilson: I look forward to Monday.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. David Tilson: Is that going to be an in camera proceeding?

The Chair: Monday is a general meeting.

I'm meeting with the clerk on Monday to try to come up with a calendar, and then we'll update the committee in a public meeting on Monday.

Mr. David Tilson: Are you saying it's going to be a public meeting on Monday?

The Chair: It is. We have an open meeting on Monday.

Mr. David Tilson: It's not going to be in camera?

The Chair: We have witnesses on Monday, so it's a regular meeting.

Mr. David Tilson: All right. How much time are you going to allow to discuss the issue of supplementary estimates?

The Chair: I will report to the committee—as I often do at committee meetings—about the schedule. You are then able to say that it would not meet your needs or your requirements as a committee. You may bring a motion at that point.

Mr. David Tilson: I'm telling you right now that it doesn't meet with my needs. You've scheduled witnesses to come on Monday, and you're not going to allow any time for this issue to be discussed.

The Chair: I always report back to the committee when we have a scheduling change. I usually take five minutes out of a meeting to explain those things. That would be my usual way of doing it on Monday. If you would like to move a motion, you're entitled to move a motion; however, we have heard your point of order, and we are having a meeting on Monday. We'll discuss the calendar over the next several weeks and figure out what is possible with respect to—

Mr. David Tilson: You're not going to rule on the point of order I have raised that we have two separate meetings for each minister?

The Chair: I don't believe that is a point of order to change what was decided at the committee on Monday.

Mr. David Tilson: No, that's why I raised it, Mr. Chairman. I've read the minutes of the meeting. I've looked at the email from the clerk, and that was not discussed. According to the minutes, what was said at the meeting was that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction would be invited to appear before the committee in relation to the study of the supplementary estimates. That has nothing to do with the issue I have raised. We have had two ministers come to this committee before, and it hasn't worked.

It wasn't expressed in these minutes. It wasn't expressed in the email of the clerk.

The Chair: I will repeat: we have one member of the committee with one concern. That may be shared by other committee members. It may not be shared. We can test that by a vote.

I would rule it out of order today, because we don't have a notice of motion on it.

Mr. David Tilson: When, on Monday, are you going to deal with this issue? First thing?

The Chair: We'll present it at the meeting on Monday, depending on when the witnesses—

Mr. David Tilson: First thing?

The Chair: We have scheduled witnesses, whom I want to respect as well. However, we will present a proposal.

Mr. David Tilson: That's my point, Mr. Chairman. You won't allow enough time to discuss this issue.

The Chair: As you know, meetings have no scheduled adjournment time. We could go forever on a point, if you wanted.

Mr. David Tilson: No, we can't. You know that. That's silly.

The Chair: We can.

Mr. David Tilson: That's a silly statement for you to make.

The Chair: We can technically go. The meeting is adjourned when the meeting is adjourned.

Mr. David Tilson: No, we can't. The meeting is scheduled and in the minutes it's supposed to go from 3:30 to 5:30. You know that.

The Chair: It's actually not true.

We can always book extra time in a meeting. The start time is actually official. The ending time—for instance, we had a meeting this week that was scheduled from 3:30 to 5:30 and ended at 4:15 or something. That happens.

Mr. David Tilson: That's in camera, Mr. Chairman. We should be careful.

The Chair: The times are public information.

Mr. David Tilson: No, they're not.

With the in camera meeting, you're not supposed to reveal what was said in camera.

The Chair: I have the minutes before me. The meeting was adjourned at 3:57.

Mr. David Tilson: Well Mr. Chairman, I hope you do allow some time on Monday to discuss this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. David Tilson: It would not be fair for all members of the committee to have only one hour for both ministers. You know it didn't work before. We've tried it here and it doesn't work.

• (1545)

The Chair: I will be at the service of the committee. The committee will make that decision, which is absolutely fair.

I have Ms. Kwan next on the list.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): I wonder if we could find a collegial way to move forward on this, in the interests of time and the witnesses and so on, and also in anticipation of the witnesses on Monday. Could we have a quick head nod of whether there is a sentiment in favour of splitting those meetings?

I think it's a fair request to split those meetings, to have the ministers and officials come in two separate hours, to accommodate questions. I think it's a fairly okay thing to ask. Instead of having it drawn into a major situation, as sometimes happens, perhaps we could just have a head nod around the table. That would give you some indication of the sentiment, Mr. Chair, to proceed. We could then maybe avert a scenario that I think we all hope to avert on Monday.

The Chair: As I have said to the committee, we'll be having a meeting to go over the schedule.

The schedule isn't just about supplementary estimates (B). It's also about two studies you have requested agenda time for. One is on migration in the 21st century and the other on settlement services. We have witnesses who have been booked.

What I tried to do with the clerk is to schedule all of those things and balance the needs of the committee to get all of our work done.

I have heard the point of order by Mr. Tilson regarding his concern. We'll take that into our meeting and I will report back, if it's your will, on Monday with respect to scheduling for the next several weeks. Then you're very welcome to change that scheduling, because that's your right.

I have Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Chair, in your initial comments you indicated that you had provided three

dates for those meetings. I agree with my colleague and Ms. Kwan that it should be split and that we have separate times for each minister. You indicated three dates that you had there. Were they March 18, 20, and sometime in February?

The Chair: No, they're February 20, 25 and 27. There are three dates where we have some flexibility in the committee schedule. We're just trying to understand. It's two ministers with their travel schedules and their other meetings, so we're just—

Mr. Larry Maguire: I don't know if you could work the two of them into those dates, but I think that would be agreeable. I leave it to you.

The Chair: There's always the possibility that both ministers will not be available on the same day, so we would have to have two meetings. That's the kind of flexibility that I think the committee normally gives. We just don't know yet when the ministers will be available.

Mr. Larry Maguire: As long as we don't run them both in the same day, it doesn't matter to me on which days they come.

The Chair: Ms. Rempel.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): It does matter. To Mr. Tilson's point, we have very few sitting weeks before the date that we are required to refer the estimates back to the House. I think there is legitimate concern among committee members that we might not get both ministers, especially when it's not clear under what purview either minister would be spending the estimates right now.

I think it would be fair to have two different panels.

It's not clear to me with what's happening on Monday. You are setting this calendar for the meetings with the ministers, or...?

The Chair: Just so that everyone knows, generally how this works is that the clerk and I review the work that you have approved to do and the work that we have to do from the House. We come up with a calendar of what is happening in the next two, three, four, or five meetings and we let you know.

I was proposing to do that on Monday, once the clerk and I have had time to look at where she's at in scheduling the witnesses you've requested and the request you've had for a meeting with respect to supplementary estimates (B).

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Do you foresee any reason why both ministers couldn't appear for separate meetings well before the date that we have to refer the supplementary estimates back to the House?

The Chair: I haven't had any conversation with either minister or with either minister's office, so I don't know their availability yet. The clerk has just alerted the ministers' offices...the departmental contacts that we are requesting them. That's where we're at right now.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So then what's happening on Monday? If we don't have their availability, how are you setting the meeting date?

The Chair: I'm hoping to have it by Monday. That's why I'm meeting the clerk on Monday, to give time to get those dates.

•(1550)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But the minister's office hasn't responded to you yet.

The Chair: Hopefully by Monday; that's....

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But do you anticipate that we would actually have the ministers this time for the supplementary estimates before those are referred back to the House?

The Chair: We have never requested that ministers appear before this committee and they have not appeared.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: But both of them....

Mr. David Tilson: They've delayed.

The Chair: We cannot compel a minister, or two or three or seven, to come to this committee. We can request that they do and invite them, and that's what we will do. We've never been declined. I have been on this committee in the past when ministers did decline to appear, but that has not happened since I've been the chair.

We have Mr. Whalen next.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): With respect to the idea of having the ministers appear separately, I think some of the points raised by Mr. Tilson and Ms. Rempel actually point to a reason to have them both here at the same time. Any confusion regarding their authorities can be resolved at the table with both of them here.

However, with respect to the departmental officials, I do agree with Mr. Tilson that quite a number of departments are implicated. I would be happy to extend the meeting on the day that both ministers come by an extra hour, two hours, three hours—as long as Mr. Tilson wants to sit here. I'll stay with him to meet with departmental officials on any topic Mr. Tilson would like to discuss.

The Chair: I would sooner not get into a discussion now about the schedule. I would like to do that once I have a proposal for you. Then you can look at the merits of what we're doing. You can overturn it. You can approve it. You can do what you want with it.

I'd like to have something that I can actually present to you, having heard Mr. Tilson's concern. Then you are very free to accept it or reject it.

Ms. Rempel.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I would just like to refute Mr. Whalen's point. I would surmise that if the ministers decided not to have separate meetings, it would be because they would rather get the pain of having to look at their large, unallocated budget expenses of paying for hotel rooms for people illegally crossing the border over with in an hour than actually diving into why they decided to do this.

So I would see no reason why two ministers with purportedly separate portfolios would not be available to account for spending over \$100 million of unallocated funds, in a deficit budget year, before this committee.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will proceed with this discussion in mind, and I will present a proposal to you on Monday.

Is it okay to proceed with our witnesses?

Mr. Manicom, thank you for your patience.

[Translation]

Mr. David Manicom (Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is David Manicom and I am the Assistant Deputy Minister for Settlement and Integration at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

I am joined by Corinne Prince, the Director General for Settlement and Immigration Policy, and by Laura Di Paolo, the Director General for the Settlement network.

We hope that our testimony will be helpful to your study.

Immigrants from every corner of the world have made significant contributions to all spheres of Canadian life, and they continue to make influential contributions to science, business, and technology.

[English]

Through new perspectives and diverse insights, immigrants also help to drive our country's intellectual and artistic capital. Many of our immigrants also bring with them an entrepreneurial spirit, creating jobs and becoming important drivers of innovation and investment.

Immigration benefits Canada's economic and demographic growth, our innovation and prosperity and our efforts at nation building. With Canada's aging population and growing labour force needs, I think we can all agree, Mr. Chair, that immigration will be vital to the continued growth and success of our country's economy and society. This statement is also supported by research.

[Translation]

Statistics Canada reports that the lion's share of national employment gains, 66% of gains between 2016 and 2017, was directly accounted for by immigrants.

And the most recent labour force survey for December 2018 shows that immigrants' employment rates are broadly in line with the national average.

The unemployment rate for core working-age immigrants stood at 5.7% in 2018.

•(1555)

[English]

This is the lowest unemployment rate for this group since at least 2006. This bodes very well for the future of immigration in Canada and suggests that our settlement program is doing a good job of helping newcomers to integrate. This is key, because ensuring that immigration remains advantageous to Canada in the future means that all newcomers are integrated and supported so they may contribute to various aspects of Canadian life.

Settlement services are a key to newcomer success, and investing in that success will be key to our nation's future prosperity and inclusiveness.

[Translation]

By the end of fiscal year 2019-2020, this will represent a 32% increase in settlement funding since 2015-2016.

In 2018-2019, our department has funded over 500 organizations and provided services to approximately 460,000 clients. Of these clients, more than 100,000 accessed language training services, reflecting the critical importance of English and French language skills for successful settlement in Canada.

[English]

Looking ahead, the ongoing success of our settlement programming will continue to depend critically upon our partnerships, which go well beyond the Government of Canada. This year we developed a shared national vision on settlement and integration with our partners, including the provinces, territories and stakeholders. That shared vision is that the successful settlement and integration of newcomers benefits Canada by building a more inclusive, diverse and productive nation. This is achieved through a shared effort that helps all reach their economic and social potential.

[Translation]

As you know, improving the delivery of settlement services is one of the commitments identified in Minister Hussen's mandate letter and is a priority that our department is intently focused on.

Our goal is to offer services that will best meet immigrants' needs and produce the best settlement outcomes possible. Our outcomes-based programming will be informed by our research, analysis, evaluation findings and the results of our new pilot projects.

[English]

To assess the effectiveness of our services, the department conducted a formal evaluation of the program, completed in May 2017. This incorporated a wide range of perspectives, including program clients, stakeholders and program officials, and comprised the largest-scale survey of newcomers ever conducted to that point, with almost 15,000 respondents. Overall, the evaluation found that our program has been effective at meeting a growing demand for settlement services. A clear majority of clients—96%—reported positive outcomes, such as improving their language ability finding employment, participating in their communities, and so forth.

[Translation]

We also conducted separate evaluations of the pre-arrival services and immigration to francophone minority communities.

The evaluations made several recommendations to improve our settlement program. The department has developed an action plan that is addressing those gaps. This plan will guide future program improvements, and inform the next calls for proposals with service providers, which will launch next month.

To date, improvements to our settlement program have included streamlining our pre-arrival settlement services for newcomers who are still abroad.

[English]

A number of projects are also under way to experiment with and assess potential new service delivery improvement projects. This

year we will devote \$32 million toward a dedicated funding stream for service delivery improvements and innovations.

One of the first of such innovative pilots is employing newcomers in stable, good-paying hotel jobs. This pilot will connect as many as 1,300 unemployed or unemployed newcomers with jobs in the hotel industry while they strengthen their language skills in the workplace.

[Translation]

Our program evaluation shows that combining employment and language training is effective and ultimately improves settlement and integration.

As such, the department is exploring more of these types of projects that combine workplace experience with language training and other supports. The Atlantic immigration program pilot is another example of this type of innovation.

● (1600)

[English]

IRCC is also launching other innovative settlement programs to target more vulnerable populations, such as refugees and women. We launched a pilot project this past December to support visible minority newcomer women in gaining access to and advancing in the labour market. Through this project, we aim to support the employment of visible minority newcomer women by increasing existing services, establishing new partnerships and testing the effectiveness of different combinations of employment services.

[Translation]

In addition, we are looking at improving the services that we offer to French-speaking newcomers who settle in francophone and Acadian communities outside of Quebec.

As announced in Budget 2018, and included in the official languages action plan, the department will invest more than \$40 million over the next five years on a francophone integration pathway.

[English]

We are also looking at improving our settlement services for refugees, which have been especially important for Syrian refugees. This spring, IRCC will issue a major report on the 52,000 Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada. We have already compiled much data from various sources. Most notably, 57% of Syrian refugees reported that they were employed, a marked increase since our 2016 rapid evaluation findings and, I think we can say, exceeding our expectations. What a wonderful collective effort from Canadians and these newcomers.

Once our report is complete, we expect the overall findings to be positive. More importantly, this will also help guide future improvements to our settlement services for refugees.

The call for proposals process that we will launch next month also will place an increased focus on key areas, including the integration of vulnerable populations, such as youth, refugees and LGBTQ2+, a greater focus on mental health supports and further enhancing our services for francophone newcomers.

[Translation]

The department recognizes that we must continue to assess what is working and what must be improved, and to continuously adapt our settlement programs to the changing needs of newcomers.

[English]

Going forward, with true co-planning with the provinces and territories and close co-operation with our partners and stakeholders, we can create a clearer picture of what newcomers need and determine how to collectively meet those needs. Our aim is to maximize the social and economic contributions of all immigrants to Canada, regardless of how they arrive.

As one of our service providers said today at a meeting I was at, it's about building a better Canada one newcomer at a time. With that in mind, Mr. Chair, we look forward to the findings of the committee's study.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the work you do on behalf of all Canadians every day as officials in the public service.

Mr. Tabbara, you have the first round for seven minutes.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the officials for joining us today.

In your statement, you mentioned improving language ability and finding employment. I have here an article from The Globe and Mail. I'll read out part of it. It is about how around the world sometimes we get some anti-immigrant sentiment about newcomers, as they might not be finding employment that fast, but as you've outlined in the numbers here, we've seen a lot of Syrians finding employment and surpassing expectations.

The quote reads:

It may come as [no] surprise that Canada's list of the wealthiest individuals includes many immigrants who started businesses in Canada. Corporations such as Magna International, BlackBerry, Saputo, Larco and Shopify, to name a few, were started by immigrants to Canada and are now among the largest employers and generators of wealth in this country.

BlackBerry is part of the Waterloo region.

I wanted to share that article, as it really shows and highlights how our country has been built on immigrants, and not just with the small mom-and-pop shops. These are very large corporations that have

employed hundreds and thousands across our country. With a lot of the investments we are making, are you seeing a lot of these success stories across our country?

•(1605)

Mr. David Manicom: People in our business work with over 500 service providers and 400,000 clients a year, so we hear a lot of success stories every day. I would just add, by way of comment on your remarks, sir, that statistics show that newcomers to Canada create jobs and become entrepreneurs at a higher rate than native-born Canadians do. That's something we certainly want to encourage. We've set up a number of programs specifically for newcomer entrepreneurs to link them with mentors in the community, to give in-class training to help them work through the expertise in how to create companies in Canada. This is something we will be looking to expand as a priority of Minister Hussen in the call for proposals that will be launched next month. That call for proposals will fund our programming envelope for the next three to five years and involve \$3 billion to \$4 billion. So entrepreneurship is certainly one of our key focuses.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: In terms of the settlement services, are investments we're making to the settlement services comparable to those of the United States and some European countries, and do we see the same successes? Or is Canada unique in how the federal government is working with federal services, investing in newcomers, investing in their success? Are there any comparables to other states?

Mr. David Manicom: No one does it quite like Canada. We have some comparator countries who have somewhat similar programming. Australia does a lot of investment in settlement, newcomer and integration, but primarily for refugees. A lot of other countries invest a lot of money at different levels of government. Certainly in Germany municipalities are very major investors in newcomer inclusion. I think the model through which we work closely in co-planning with the provinces using community-based service providers through grants and contributions funding arrangements creates a network embedded in our towns and cities that is somewhat unique. I don't think our network of service providers, which leverage many hundreds of thousands of volunteer dollars, for example, volunteers, could be replicated by government if we had to start from scratch. I think we've inherited a wonderful network of community-embedded expertise, which is a great contributor to our success story.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: You also mentioned in your statement another program that you've put in place quite recently to support visible minorities, newcomers and women. Can you elaborate on that? Was this a group that was not as successful in integration and maybe finding employment, and is this why we've put in a certain program to help these groups?

Mr. David Manicom: Statistically the newcomer group that does least well with employment is visible minority newcomer women. They often face multiple barriers to employment, including gender, race-based discrimination, precarious or low income, and lack of social networks, affordable child care and so forth. The government, through budget 2018, committed \$32 million over three years to support employment-related programming for this group. We launched that pilot this past December. We're doing that in several different ways. We're increasing current programming. We've just launched an expression-of-interest process to establish new partnerships with non-traditional partners, and it has had a very high uptake. We also have a controlled study to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of employment-related services, at the conclusion of which we hope we will have insights into how best to spend money in the future for the best results.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Okay.

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Just over a minute.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'm okay.

The Chair: All right.

We're now going to turn to Ms. Rempel.

Just before we do, because you slip in and out all the time, Luwam, I just want to acknowledge to the committee that this will be your last committee meeting with us. I'm sure you're going to miss us, and on behalf of the whole committee, I want to thank you for your work in representing the whip's office for the Conservative Party. Good luck. You disappear sometimes, so I wanted to make sure I got a chance to say that. On behalf of the whole committee, thank you for your work.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Is that your successor?

Ms. Luwam Ghebre (Committees Coordinator, Office of the Chief Opposition Whip, House of Commons): Yes, it is. This is Emily.

The Chair: Emily? Good. Welcome.

Ms. Emily Thibert: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Rempel.

•(1610)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Manicom, what percentage of the government-assisted refugee cohort of the Syrian refugees, as per the statistic you cited, are employed?

Mr. David Manicom: Pardon?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: With regard to the statistic of 57% that you mentioned, can you break that down between government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees? How many government-sponsored refugees are employed and how many privately sponsored refugees are employed?

Mr. David Manicom: According to the survey results, 43% of GARs were employed and 60% of PSRs.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Was that full-time employment or part-time employment?

Mr. David Manicom: That was all employment.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So you don't have it broken down by full time or part time.

Mr. David Manicom: I don't.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Okay. Do you have any information on what percentage of the entire cohort might still be drawing social assistance payments from provincial governments?

Mr. David Manicom: No, I don't have that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So you're not tracking this based on full-time or part-time employment.

Mr. David Manicom: We'll have detailed information later this spring from database linkages, which is how we get information on

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Are you tracking it by full time and part time? Can we expect to get that information in the report?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, the database will enable us to give employment outcomes by income.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Okay. So the statistic that you cited today was based on a survey of a sample.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, there was a survey of over 50,000 individuals, both clients and non-clients, and 1,200 of the respondents were Syrian refugees.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So the survey would have been of a sample. Do you know from which regions the sample was taken? What percentage of the 1,200 was taken from which regions of the country?

Mr. David Manicom: We have that information. I don't have that breakdown in front of me, but it was representative of the national scatter of arrival of refugees.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: What was the question that was asked with regard to employment on the survey?

Mr. David Manicom: Mr. Kiziltan may have that. I think they were asked, "Are you in employment?"

Mr. Ümit Kiziltan (Director General, Research and Evaluation, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): The question was, "Are you employed?"

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Was "employed" defined?

Mr. David Manicom: The question was, "Are you employed?"

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So "employment" was not defined by full time or part time.

Mr. David Manicom: No.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: And it was self-reported?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Was it verified against any records or was it just self-reporting?

Mr. David Manicom: No, it's self-reporting.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Of a 1,200-person sample....

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: And we don't know what regions it was taken from.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, we do.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Will you table that with the committee?

Mr. David Manicom: If you wish.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

On page 14 of your departmental performance report this year, it shows a steady decline in the average earnings of economic immigrants to Canada over the last few years. Did you do any analysis on why that could be?

Mr. David Manicom: It was a steady decline of economic earnings?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: It was the average earnings of economic immigrants. I'm just wondering if any economic analysis was done on that trend and if you could table that with the committee.

Mr. David Manicom: Is that accurate, Ümit?

Mr. Ümit Kiziltan: I do not recall the text, Mr. Chair. Economic immigrants, overall, have been increasing their average and median income. We will have to check that and come back.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: It's on page 14. I took that from your departmental performance report. I hope that somebody knows that it's in there.

In terms of integration outcomes, does the department have a set of metrics or key performance indicators it uses to define integration?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: What would those be?

If it's going to take a long time, would you mind tabling that with the committee?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, we'd be happy to table them to the committee.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Thank you.

Part of the challenge of finding information on settlement services is that there's not a standard definition of what those are and evaluating budgetary support for them. I'm just wondering if you could tell us about the type of settlement services and if there's a difference between them for a permanent resident, a temporary resident and a protected person.

The people crossing at Roxham Road they would be on the temporary resident side. What settlement services would temporary residents receive when they're in Canada?

Mr. David Manicom: The federal government does not provide settlement services to temporary residents.

•(1615)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Would you consider the Canada child benefit a resettlement service?

Mr. David Manicom: No.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Is that managed through another department that would be able to track information on that for us?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Another component of settlement services concerns relationships. We hear a lot about that. Certainly, a lot of civil society groups talk about relationship stability or potential abuse. One of the areas I'd like to explore in this study is the removal of conditional permanent residency for sponsored spouses.

I know that the policy change in that regard had good intentions, but I've had a few cases, including a specific one where the unintended consequence was forcing a constituent to remain financially responsible for her documented abusive husband for a three-year undertaking period. She sponsored her husband, and now your department will not let her out of the undertaking period, despite her applying for divorce and filing assault charges against him.

Why would your department force somebody to stay in an abusive relationship in a sponsorship situation as a result of the change that was made under this government? Have you seen many cases like this?

Mr. David Manicom: That's not in my area of responsibility, but there are provisions for relieving individuals in abusive situations of their sponsorship obligations. That's my understanding.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: You're fairly senior in the department, sir. I'm just wondering, again—

Mr. David Manicom: I did used to have policy responsibility for that area, and there are provisions—

Hon. Michelle Rempel: So would you speak to it based on your institutional knowledge?

Mr. David Manicom: There are provisions for relieving individuals of their sponsorship obligations in abusive situations. That's my understanding.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I would love for you to table those with the committee, because that is not the response we got from your department on this particular case.

Mr. David Manicom: Okay, we'd be delighted to.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the officials for the presentation and the answers to our questions.

On the resettlement services side, one of the key issues is that I think especially the vulnerable newcomers who have experienced trauma have had difficulties in accessing counselling services or psychological support. That seems to be an ongoing challenge, especially in the language capacity that could help and support them.

We had Yazidi survivors, for example, and we learned through the committee that five Yazidi survivors have had access to individualized trauma counselling in Canada. I hope things have changed since that time.

I wonder if you can let the committee know what work has been done in this regard to ensure that kind of support is in place for especially vulnerable newcomers.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, we have certainly been working very hard on improving mental health supports. The medical mental health supports, of course, are a provincial responsibility, but we've been increasing our ability to do crisis counselling in cases where newcomers require trauma counselling service providers.

There certainly was a challenge in a small number of cases in providing interpretation services in the Yazidi native language. We believe we have resolved those situations in all the places where we have resettled Yazidi individuals.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Sorry, can I interrupt you there?

How have you resolved it, then? Can you just give us some information how that has been resolved?

Mr. David Manicom: My understanding is that we have identified Kermanji-speaking interpreters in those communities now, so that we now are able to provide that service in their mother tongue.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: That is to say if an individual requires that service in their mother tongue, they would express that and then the federal government will ensure that translation services are in place wherever the person is relocated? Is my understanding correct?

Mr. David Manicom: My understanding is that, in the places where we resettled most of the Yazidis, we have been able now to identify Kermanji-speaking interpreters.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay.

There has been a scenario I know of in the Lower Mainland where a woman was diagnosed with cancer. She was not able to get her diagnosis because of the language issue, and in fact she only happened to find out her diagnosis by happenstance. She went to the hospital to see the doctor to get the information. Somebody spoke her language. She asked that person to interpret for her. That's how she got her diagnosis.

Aside from where the Yazidi population has been resettled—and that issue has been addressed—has that been addressed overall for newcomers throughout the country?

• (1620)

Mr. David Manicom: I would never be able to say that we have interpretation service available for every single newcomer in Canada. But we have very substantial interpretation services provided through all of our service-provider organizations across the country.

You will have cases of a little-spoken language in a particular area where interpretation services are not available. Very few Yazidis were resettled in the Lower Mainland, and it would not be surprising if someone were in an area where there was not a Kermanji interpreter.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Sorry, in that instance I used as an example, it wasn't actually a Yazidi woman. It was a Syrian woman who came, so it wasn't an unusual language in that context. But she wasn't able to get her language translated.

My point here is that the suggestion to say that every newcomer will access interpretation is stretching it. I get that. But on the resettlement service side, what work has the federal government

done to ensure this is being met for medical needs? You would think that is pretty significant.

What I would like to hear from the government side is that service is being provided and that families who require it would be able to access it. It is inappropriate, for example, for a family member... I come from an immigrant family, and when I was little, I often had to go to a doctor's appointment to be the translator for my mom and dad. That's not appropriate, and I think it's particularly inappropriate for newcomers of today.

What work have we done to address that issue? You say that for the Yazidi families, where they have been resettled, that's been addressed. You said that.

Now I'm getting to the larger overall population in terms of ensuring that resettlement service is being provided for newcomers.

Mr. David Manicom: Most specifically for government-resettled refugees, where we destine people through our destination matching centre, the availability of interpretation services is certainly one of the factors considered. We would try to make sure that we don't destine a resettled refugee to a community where we cannot provide interpretation in their language.

With regard to immigrants overall, we have our network of 500 service provider organizations across the country, and providing interpretation services is one of the services that we have contracted to provide.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: If I were a refugee newcomer and I went to a service agency and said I needed a translator or an interpreter to go with me to see my doctor, would that service be provided? Is that how that would work?

When you say all these agencies are provided the service, how do people on the ground get it, because what I'm hearing on the ground is that people can't get it?

Mr. David Manicom: As I said, Madam, we have a very extensive network of service providers across the country that provide interpretation services in hundreds of languages. Of course, I cannot say there are no newcomers who failed to access interpretation service.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Chair, maybe I can ask the officials to table the list of the organizations broken down by where they are located so we would know where these services are, what they provide and how one can access them. so that we actually have that information—

Mr. David Manicom: They're free of charge.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I get it that they're free of charge, but I guess you're not quite getting my point that people are not able to access that service. That's my point.

As recently as last winter, I met with a group of vulnerable women who cannot access this service. You say it's available, but somehow they're not getting it. How does one go about getting it? Where are these service agencies? Does someone just show up at the agency and say they need the service and are provided with it, or not?

Mr. David Manicom: That's right.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you for coming. It's always good to hear an update from you and having you explain the settlement process that welcomes newcomers to Canada.

We got an answer on the percentage of Syrian refugees now employed based on the survey. Do we have data on how many families are employed, or at least one member of every family being employed? It could happen that one spouse is gainfully employed while the other is taking care of the younger children, so the whole family may not be seeking employment but might be fully employed. Is there a way to figure that out from your survey?

• (1625)

Mr. David Manicom: I don't believe so, based on the survey. The survey results I cited are for all adult Syrians. Later this spring we will have the first database linkages showing us income for all refugees in 2017, which is really the first fully meaningful calendar year related to the large-scale arrival of Syrians, most of whom arrived in 2016, and so 2017 is the first full tax year. We will have that information in several months, and I believe that we could then do household analysis, as opposed to individual analysis.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Would that also include how many refugees are on social services versus not?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: I ask because my assumption is that the households would be even less. If that's how many people are gainfully employed, there would be very few. A significant number of them are living in my riding in the Lower Mainland core, and I would say that a majority of them are gainfully employed and that very few are now on social assistance. This corroborates what I'm thinking, but I would like to know a breakdown, if you have that to table. If we expect it in spring, then I would look forward to seeing that then.

In your evaluation of the settlement program, your first recommendation states that the IRCC should review and assess its language training delivery and implement appropriate changes to improve its effectiveness. What are the key factors that you believe led to this lack of effectiveness?

Mr. David Manicom: The difficulty isn't so much lack of effectiveness but demonstrating and attributing our program spending dollars to outcomes. This is very hard to do in lots of social program areas. For that reason, and because we spend a lot of our programming dollars on language training, we have decided to do a separate, more detailed evaluation of language training per se. That evaluation is under way right now.

We do all types of language training, from informal conversation circles to more advanced language training to help people get professional accreditation, so measuring outcomes is challenging. Most particularly, we wanted to do a few things. We wanted to dramatically reduce waiting lists for those with the greatest need, those in the lower levels of the language spectrum, so they can begin initial integration. We've had some success there. Our waiting lists are about 49% smaller than they were a year ago. We also want to dramatically increase the availability of language training linked to employment so that individuals don't have to make the choice

between continuing to improve their language skills and getting jobs. Those are our areas we're particularly focused on right now.

We have many other initiatives under way to improve the quality of classroom teaching, to develop better curricula and so forth, but those are a couple I would point to.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: There was a complaint when I met with several settlement agencies in the past that people wouldn't quit a language.... So you're in a LINC program. You come in once in a while, you don't go, but you don't lose your spot and they can't take another student because you still have that spot.

Is there any way to make improve that situation, i.e., that you specify a minimum attendance level and that if someone is attending and they want to continue, by all means they should be allowed to go for further language development, versus those who are registering but not attending or not really participating or being eager to learn, because it holds a spot back for someone else. Sometimes these queues are artificially induced—

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: —appearing to be full, but really only half or two-thirds of the class are showing up. I'm not saying that you have to pass with a 75% average to get to the next class, but how can you have some sorts of metrics that specify that you should at least be making the effort to show up?

Mr. David Manicom: Yes, this is an area we struggle with quite a bit. I was just at a meeting of our National Language Advisory Board. Our National Settlement Council is also meeting this week. It's very much settlement week in Ottawa.

They're doing a lot of detailed work on finding that tough balance between being kind and welcoming and a little bit tough as well. We now do restrict people to be on no more than two waiting lists. With our service providers, we're trying to develop standards for when someone says, "I'm not available now" for reason X and Y, "but I'm available next month", and whether we should keep them on the waiting list or remove them.

This question of enrolment versus attendance is something that we struggle with. Generally speaking, we understand there are lots of good reasons why some immigrants aren't able to attend all of their classes. It might be child-minding responsibilities. It might be part-time employment. We work with our service providers to try to have a reasonable approach, but it is a challenging area knowing where tough love becomes too harsh.

• (1630)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: In terms of pre-arrival services, what percentage of eligible immigrants currently use pre-arrival services?

Mr. David Manicom: It's quite low.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Does this also apply to international students? Are they able to use pre-arrival services? I ask because Surrey has a big cohort of international students who are doing really well, but—

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: —a lot of times they're misled about what to expect in Canada or about their financial obligations. I don't believe they're getting any pre-arrival settlement services and I was wondering if you would be broadening services. It's a two-part question.

Mr. David Manicom: On the first part, the uptake of pre-arrival services is still quite low. I think it's around 10%, but we'll get you information on that. Of course, sometimes it's because people are coming as a sponsored spouse. They don't feel they need it. Other people already have a job and so they access services as they need them.

In our program redesign, which we've made much more streamlined with more centralized intake at the front end, we certainly need to do a better job of making sure that all newcomers know about the services and have an easy pathway into the system.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Currently how would they know?

Mr. David Manicom: Through websites and through—

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Does it come on your acceptance letter? I apply for immigration, I got accepted into a program.

Mr. David Manicom: Yes.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Does it say, here are some pre-arrival services you can call?

Mr. David Manicom: At the approval in principle stage, they get in writing information about the availability of these programs.

Your second question was....

Mr. Randeep Sarai: In regard to students, there are international students....

The Chair: I need to ask you to be very quick on this.

Mr. David Manicom: International students are not currently eligible for our settlement programming. At this time, we give it to permanent residents only, with a few small exceptions.

The Chair: Thank you.

That will end our first panel. I suspect that we may ask for more information from you at some point with respect to the breadth of some of the services and the makeup of the programs, and some fundamental things that I think we may need to have as a basis. I'll just let you know that we may get back to you on that.

Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I just want to clarify something in my request for information. I don't know if I heard a firm affirmative from the officials undertaking to meet my request for the committee. I just want to confirm that will be the case.

The Chair: Sure. We'll ask the clerk. I think we assume that it's always affirmative. We'll ask the clerk to follow up from the minutes to make sure that the department has all of the requests that we made so that you understand what we've asked for and can clarify.

Mr. David Manicom: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and in concluding, there was a reference to difficulty with information about how we define our programs and what we spend on each. We do have very firm hard data on all of the services we provide, how many dollars we spend in each one and so forth and so on, which we could certainly provide to the committee.

The Chair: I think a little briefing package from the department would be helpful to the committee members to understand the breadth, the geographic and demographic makeup, anything that you have that you would enable the committee to understand the depth of that.

Mr. David Manicom: We could provide, I would suggest, some of our off-the-shelf materials, and then if there are gaps, we can attempt to answer them.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I have a couple of quick questions, but I don't need to ask them now; I just need the answers. Could I table them with the clerk, and we'll have the officials respond to them?

The Chair: Sure. Give them to the clerk, and we'll get the answers to you.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I'll get them emailed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to suspend for just a moment to change the panel. We have a video conference witness, as well as some in the room.

Thank you to the officials; we'll be in touch.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: Thanks to our witnesses for joining us for the second hour. We're beginning our study on settlement services. In particular, this first panel is on pre-arrival services, which are part of that continuum of services.

We're going to begin with Mr. Cecchetto from the IOM. We're glad you're here.

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto (Liaison Officer, Canadian Orientation Abroad, International Organization for Migration): Thank you.

The Chair: We're going to begin with your presentation, and then we'll go to Ms. Choo from Alberta.

[Translation]

Next, we will hear from the representatives of the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada.

Mr. Cecchetto, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: My name is Matthew Cecchetto. On behalf of the International Organization for Migration, I would like to thank you for this invitation to discuss how the United Nations organization for migration provides pre-arrival services for refugees through the Canadian orientation abroad program.

I would like to show you a short animated video featuring the story of a refugee family and their resettlement journey. It outlines the plight of refugees and the International Organization for Migration's role in essential aspects of the resettlement and integration process.

[Video presentation]

As the members of the standing committee saw, in addition to travel assistance and pre-departure health assessment services, IOM provides pre-departure orientation sessions to refugees selected overseas by the Canadian government for resettlement.

IOM has been funded by the Canadian government since 1998 to provide pre-departure orientation to refugees via the Canadian orientation abroad program, and has provided orientation to over 127,000 refugees. IRCC recognized that no other organization has the infrastructure, experience or capacity to deliver pre-arrival orientation services to refugees worldwide at a comparable cost, and chose to enter into a targeted service agreement with IOM for the next 4.25 years.

IOM believes pre-departure orientation is integral to the success of resettlement programs. Unlike economic immigrants, who choose to move to Canada, no one chooses to be a refugee. Some refugees may lack knowledge of Canada, which leads to high levels of anxiety, misperception, and unrealistic expectations. These expectations may not only cause stress to the newcomers upon their arrival but may also put pressure on service providers who work to help them adapt and adjust to life in their new communities.

COA sessions provided by IOM's multilingual, multi-ethnic facilitators help refugees anticipate integration challenges and ease their transition into Canadian society. Some of the topics addressed in the orientation include pre-departure preparations, housing, health, money management, the role of settlement service providers, education, cultural adaptation, and rights and responsibilities. COA sessions last anywhere from one to three days, depending on the setting, on the level of need, and on practical and security considerations. COA sessions are conducted in the participant's mother tongue or with consecutive interpretation. Travel and accommodation allowances are provided to refugees who travel long distances or who may be in precarious financial situations. Meals and childminding are provided free of charge during the COA sessions. These services help promote inclusion and equality and address some of the barriers refugees may face when accessing pre-departure orientation services.

● (1640)

IOM works closely with Canadian counterparts to develop curricula with key messages that are integrated into tailored resources and supporting activities. Refugees learn best and the lessons are more meaningful when the activities are experiential and highly participatory. While accurate information about Canada is relevant, it is equally important to build productive attitudes for successful adaptation, including proactivity, self-sufficiency and resourcefulness.

By empowering refugees to become self-sufficient and culturally knowledgeable upon arrival, pre-arrival services such as the Canadian orientation abroad service also indirectly contribute to improving the public perception of refugees in receiving communities.

In IRCC's rapid impact evaluation of the Syrian refugee initiative in 2016, the department cited that the lack of COA due to logistical issues meant that the basic information Syrian refugees were expected to have upon arrival had to be provided in Canada, making

their initial resettlement stages even more difficult, so we have two recommendations for pre-arrival services from IOM.

First, refugees are resilient and positively contribute to Canadian society. Their outcomes improve when they are provided services that are tailored to their needs. All newcomers require support, but for refugees some needs cannot be met by services designed for other categories of immigrants. IOM recommends that IRCC provide appropriate and equitable funding to refugee-specific pre-arrival services and open consultation on the funding levels of these programs.

Second, IOM offers a portfolio of tried and tested services to facilitate the orderly migration of refugees to Canada. IOM recommends that the IRCC proactively plan refugee processing in order to support resettlement stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for the refugees we serve.

Mr. Chair, I sincerely thank the standing committee members for their time. I would be happy to answer any questions they may have.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to go to Ms. Choo, who is in Alberta.

It's nice to see you again, Ms. Choo. Thank you for joining us by video conference. You have about seven minutes to talk about S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and about your pre-arrival services as well.

Ms. Queenie Choo (Chief Executive Officer, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon.

My name is Queenie Choo and I'm the CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

I'd like to start off by thanking you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's important study on settlement services, particularly on pre-arrival.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest non-profit immigrant and refugee service agencies, with over 30 service locations that support newcomers from 150 countries. We are very unique because we deliver the entire continuum of settlement services from pre-arrival to port of entry to post-arrival in Canada. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. settlement services benefited over 48,000 newcomers last year.

Let me begin by sharing the experience of one of our clients.

Leanna is a skilled worker from the Philippines and she has a background in IT and worked as a business analyst. She was approved to immigrate to Canada last year, but she was worried about her career prospects in Canada. She wasn't familiar with the Canadian labour market, didn't know how to enter the IT sector again, and was concerned that her years of expertise and skills would be lost. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. pre-arrival services, AEIP, provided Leanna with individualized service to help her develop her career plan, along with her knowledge and skills, to succeed in Canada's IT sector. They also connected her with the national IT sector council so that she could enhance her professional connections.

As Leanna was planning to move to Vancouver where the IT sector is thriving, the pre-arrival service also connected her to S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s post-arrival settlement services in Vancouver. As a result, Leanna was able to seamlessly transition from pre-arrival to post-arrival services. Once she arrived in Vancouver, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s settlement services, ISIP, continued to help her establish her new life in Canada. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. provided her with continual career coaching as she applied for jobs and attended interviews.

As she had already started the process prior to arriving in Canada, Leanna achieved results quickly. I'm very happy to tell you that after just two months in Canada Leanna received not only one but two job offers. She is now working again as a business analyst at a major financial institute, continuing to build on the career she had started in the Philippines.

As you can tell from Leanna's story, her settlement journey started off with S.U.C.C.E.S.S.'s pre-arrival services through our Active Engagement and Integration Project, AEIP. Since 2008, our pre-arrival services have accelerated newcomers' settlement and integration processes by providing early information to support newcomers in making informed decisions and taking action to achieve their settlement goals.

Currently, AEIP is delivered through service centres in China and South Korea, through outreach across China as well as online globally to India, the Philippines and other countries to support newcomers who have been selected by IRCC to immigrate to Canada and are now at the stage of preparing to move to Canada.

Our pre-arrival services include information and orientation about various aspects of life in Canada; early support with foreign credential recognition, career planning and job search; opportunities to connect with Canadian employers, even before departure; and bridging to post-arrival settlement services in whichever community they choose to settle in.

Some of the benefits have been, for example, that newcomers are engaged earlier in the settlement process; that they are better prepared for the Canadian labour market; that they have a clearer understanding of different communities across Canada; and that there is a strong uptake of settlement services in Canada as newcomers are informed about and connected to services in the pre-arrival stage already.

There has been an increasing demand for pre-arrival services. In just the last year, our AEIP program served over 5,600 newcomers. This year we are already on pace to exceed last year's number by 30%.

● (1650)

Here are some of the recommendations that I would like to share on opportunities, moving forward, to further enhance services along the entire settlement continuum.

First, there continues to be a significant need for investment into the entire continuum of settlement services, from pre-arrival to post-arrival, to ensure all newcomers have the information, resources and tools to succeed in Canada. Funding for settlement services needs to take into consideration settlement trends, demand for services and patterns of secondary migration.

Second, we need to look at scaling up innovative and integrated service models that accelerate the achievement of settlement outcomes. There are many best practices out there and innovative models that are already being delivered across Canada. We need to think about how we can scale these up to reach more newcomers. For example, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. delivers innovative online employment language training to support newcomers who are attending skills training or are already working but need more support to continue to improve their English proficiency.

Third, at the same time, there also needs to be greater investment into specialized settlement services for newcomers who are more vulnerable.

Fourth, there is a need to increase support for language training for newcomers. As some of you already know, it is not easy to learn a new language, especially in a new country with a new culture, so it is important to start language training, perhaps, from the early onset in the pre-arrival state and reduce the wait times, as well as support various modes of language training such as conversation circles, family literacy and occupation-specific language training.

Fifth, we also need to consider extending settlement services to support long-term success. Once newcomers become Canadian citizens, they are no longer eligible for IRCC-funded settlement services and language training. While some provinces provide funding for services for naturalized citizens, there are inequities in the levels of funding. As a result, depending on where newcomers reside, they could have higher or lower levels of settlement services.

Last but not least, the settlement lens needs to be widened. All sectors, including housing, health, education and business, need to play a role in building communities that are inclusive of newcomers. Settlement services play a key role in bridging newcomers to these sectors, but these sectors must also be ready to serve newcomers. For example, at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. our settlement program works closely with local family doctors to enhance the capacity to serve new refugee families.

I would like to end by encouraging any one of you to visit S.U.C.C.E.S.S. or your local settlement services providers to learn more about the positive impacts of these services. Thank you very much for allowing me to share our story and our experience today.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I would also encourage the committee members to visit S.U.C.C.E.S.S. I had a great tour of your facilities and saw some examples of what you do. It's very impressive. Thanks for being here and for the work you do.

[*Translation*]

We will continue with the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada (RDEE).

You have seven minutes to tell us about the activities you have designed for immigrants.

Mr. Jean-Guy Bigeau (President, Executive Director, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, thank you for having us today.

Founded in 1997, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDEE Canada), sets up many structuring projects each year to stimulate economic development and employability in all of Canada's francophone and Acadian communities. Our national organization acts as a lever to create business opportunities for each of our members in all provinces and territories, except Quebec. So we have 12 members.

With that in mind and with our network's cooperation, in 2015, RDEE Canada responded to a call for tenders from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship for the launch of a pre-arrival support project in Canada. That's how we obtained the mandate to provide this sort of service, specifically in French, for francophone clients in the process of immigrating to the country.

To do so, we have partnered with other francophone and bilingual service providers, such as the Information and Communications Technology Council, JVS and La Cité collégiale, with international associations, such as Pôle emploi, in France, and ethnocultural associations in Morocco, Tunisia, France and Belgium. Thanks to the mobilization and expertise of RDEE Canada members in all provinces and territories and our other partners, pre-departure services have become the first francophone employability and entrepreneurship online services for immigrants in Canada.

With the support of our immigration officers in the provinces and territories, who are the primary source of information preferred by clients, RDEE Canada's pre-departure services provide free services in French directly on site. This service structure, which provides personalized and remote advice, ensures better economic integration

of immigrants, in addition to connecting newcomers to the host francophone community.

From September 2015 to December 2018, the pre-departure services provided the following support services to immigrant clients. First, participants registered on a web platform. Then, we assessed the needs of clients individually with an expert adviser. We also provided access to online resources and tools, such as fact sheets, webinars or virtual job fairs. We then referred the clients to the RDEE Canada agency in the province or territory matching their destination of choice. This stage ensured local support tailored to their needs. We also ensured that we guided clients carefully to other partner organization that provide settlement services in the destination communities, according to the identified needs. Finally, we developed surveys to obtain feedback on the services received by clients.

We believe that the service structure put in place by RDEE Canada met the needs of francophone clients and helped achieve francophone immigration targets in Canada.

For the last three years, our pre-departure services helped more than 700 francophone clients eligible for immigration, according to IRCC criteria. Our customized support services allowed 75% of the clients to land a job within the first six months of their arrival. That figure went up to 90% after more than six months of job search.

According to the surveys we conducted, 97% of clients were satisfied with the services received, and more than 92% of them responded that they would recommend pre-departure services to others trying to immigrate to Canada.

These results were achieved with an average annual budget of \$400,000. We can therefore say that these are best practices that have given convincing results.

At RDEE Canada, we believe that the economic integration of newcomers is an essential component of their immigration journey. We believe that the success of immigrants' arrival in Canada is measured when they obtain a job that matches their skills and can contribute to the economic growth of their communities and host country. The pre-departure services provided by RDEE Canada and its members have also helped to promote the retention of immigrants in francophone and Acadian host communities.

With its Canada-wide background in francophone immigration and the expertise acquired in the field by network members, RDEE Canada was invited to submit a new nation-wide project, in keeping with the criteria set out in the call for proposals, namely that of a one-stop shop for francophone immigration. We therefore responded to the call for tenders issued by the IRCC in 2018.

•(1700)

As part of this project, we proposed a budget and requested financial support of \$6 million over five years. The objective was to establish a one-stop shop to provide a continuum of services and make the immigration process even more effective and, above all, client-centred. However, our proposal was not accepted. Since we no longer receive funding, the pre-departure services that we had been offering since 2015 ended on December 31, 2018.

In closing, I would like to make the following two recommendations. Pre-arrival francophone services must be timely, seamless and efficient. Francophone pre-departure services must also include a very well-developed employability and entrepreneurship component.

My thanks to the members of the committee for having us.

We are more than happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to questions and comments.

Ms. Zahid, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair and thanks to all three witnesses for providing their testimony today as we start this important study on settlement services. It's an important aspect of the immigration department.

My first question will be for IOM. How do you decide where to offer the pre-arrival services? Are you contracted by the IRCC to serve some specific areas or groups, or is it your decision?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: Our mandate is to serve, as many as possible, all refugees worldwide. We have 12 permanent offices or sites, where we do refugee pre-departure training. Five of those have regional capabilities, so we do mobile sessions, depending on the location of the refugees. We work in the top source countries. For refugees, we have an office in Turkey and Lebanon.

IOM is a very large organization. We have over 398 offices worldwide and 179 member states. Being the UN agency for migration, we are able to get to a lot of places. There are a few countries where we can't provide pre-departure orientation for political or security reasons.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: You mentioned in your comments that you provide childminding and financial assistance to travel if needed. Is it mandatory by IRCC that you provide the childminding services and travel assistance, and is it the standard requirement across the board for all the agencies that provide pre-arrival services?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: For pre-arrival services for refugees, we're the only organization that does in-person information and orientation. Part of our funding package does mandate that we provide childminding services, transportation assistance and lodging assistance, when necessary, so it is something that is provided by the government.

As far as the other 25 countries where IOM provides pre-departure orientation are concerned, it depends on the country if it chooses to provide those services. For example, there are some countries that do

provide similar services to Canada, but Canada tends to provide a lot of services.

•(1705)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: What percentage of refugees are getting the pre-arrival services? Do you have some statistics showing what percentage of them are using those services?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: Yes, I do have some statistics. In fiscal year 2017-18, over 23,000 refugees moved with IOM to Canada. We calculated that of the 23,000 refugees, 15,434 were eligible for COA based on their age. We provided orientation to 76% of that number.

The way we look at numbers is a bit difficult, because IRCC goes through iCARE. We know there were some reporting gaps for the number of refugees that did receive pre-departure orientation by iCARE. Also, although we say that in one year IOM has moved x number of refugees to Canada and we've trained x number of refugees, we do know that some of the people we trained don't leave within the same calendar year. We do have quite a significant uptake, because we do offer all of those support services and IOM moves the majority of refugees coming to Canada.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Have you gathered some statistics or done some analysis of those refugees who use the pre-arrival services to see how well and how quickly they were able to integrate into the Canadian system in getting jobs, versus those who didn't have pre-arrival services?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: We're funded for pre-arrivals only, and the department has mandated us to really focus on the skills and knowledge necessary for their first three to six months within Canada. We haven't been able to do any sort of research into long-term goals, but I know that the department is looking at linking information on who received pre-arrival services as recorded in iCARE, with CRA data. As Mr. Manicom had mentioned, those systems are going to be linking up and might provide more information on outcomes of people who do take pre-arrival services.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: My next question is for Ms. Choo. Have you done some of that analysis, because you also provide services to the newcomers when they arrive? Have you made some sort of analysis on how well and how quickly the newcomers integrate, those who have used the pre-arrival services versus those who have not?

Ms. Queenie Choo: We did, in fact. We are only one of the providers for the pre-arrival services—our AEIP—and I wanted to share with you some of the client outcomes.

People are very interested in employment knowledge and skill. Over 93% of the people we served indicated that their employment knowledge and skill has increased, and certainly it's climbing in the right direction. As well, over 91% of clients identified that the information provided to them through the pre-arrival program has been very helpful; and also over 92% of them are very happy with their settlement knowledge about Canada.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Do you tend to—

The Chair: I'm afraid I need to end it there.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Okay.

The Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Maguire.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I want to thank all of the witnesses for their presentations today.

Mr. Cecchetto, I just want to touch base. You mentioned the orderly refugee processing of newcomers. Is that an open-funding level? You mentioned something about that. Can you just expand on your second recommendation there?

• (1710)

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: The second recommendation was about timely refugee processing and planning. The first recommendation was providing appropriate funding to refugee-specific programming. As Ms. Choo mentioned, refugees have specific needs. Specific programming should be provided to them and consultation with service provider organizations should be conducted by IRCC when determining the funding and the funding level.

I'm not sure if that answers your question.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Number one, can you just give us some examples of how you'd better tailor the needs between the IOM and the IRCC. I guess your initiative is funded by IRCC, so what is your budget for the year?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: We entered into a targeted service agreement for the next 4.25 years, and we're funded for \$21.1 million. That includes all of the support services I mentioned—our staffing costs and all of the program-related costs.

Our cost per capita is projected to be \$446 per refugee over the 4.25 years.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Yes, you're covering a lot of refugees there, for sure.

Ms. Choo, you made six recommendations. Can you give me your first one again?

Ms. Queenie Choo: The first recommendation had to do with investment in the entire continuum of settlement services from pre-arrival to post-arrival to ensure that all newcomers have the information, resources and tools to succeed in Canada. Funding for settlement services needs to take into consideration settlement trends, demand for services, as well as patterns of secondary migration.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Can you expand on the vulnerability you talked about in your third recommendation?

Ms. Queenie Choo: Sure. Thank you.

Certainly by supporting the vulnerable newcomers earlier, we anticipate cost savings down the road, as they will be less likely to require more costly health services, legal services or financial assistance from the government.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Both of you are talking about looking at the opportunities to do more training and education pre-entry to Canada. What time frames do you think are required, and how much of that would be extra language training?

Ms. Queenie Choo: I think this is my fourth recommendation.

There's a need to support language training for newcomers. As you know, for newcomers in a new country with a new culture and language barriers, we would certainly like to see as soon as possible—within the first year or even six months—their acquiring skills, especially those occupation-specific skill sets. Language develops over time. Certainly I think it's important to introduce it at the earliest stage, rather than a later stage.

Mr. Larry Maguire: My point was how much of that would be done before they arrive in Canada, and how much extra time would you add?

Ms. Queenie Choo: I would suggest that a better way would be to provide some specific language training pre-arrival, maybe six months before they arrive in Canada, related to the jobs they are going to take. That would be a perfect way to support their journey.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you.

Matthew.

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: IOM was funded between 1990 and 1998 to provide language training to refugees before they arrived. We see how language training before arrival can benefit newcomers, but we often see as well that in some situations, especially with displaced and vulnerable people, language training might not be conducive in all cases.

We do see some barriers to refugee populations attending our orientation sessions, such as the need to work and things like that, but we can add language training if—

• (1715)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you.

I have a question from my colleague.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Cecchetto, when I was preparing for committee today I looked through the website for Canadian Orientation Abroad. I noticed that it didn't have anything that mentioned women and girls. I'm just wondering if you could table with the committee any programming you provide to educate the women and girls who are coming to Canada on their rights. I have a similar question for the LGBT community as well—I guess both ways.

With the time I have left, could you present to the committee any specific best practices you have on resettling members of the LGBT community or members of a community who might be coming to Canada from one that's not supportive of their coming into a very inclusive country like Canada?

Do you see any gaps in resettlement services in Canada, specifically for educating women and girls on their rights when they come to Canada or the resources they have available to them? Similarly, I ask the same about the LGBT community.

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: In addressing women and girls, in our sessions we focus on the equality of everyone here in Canada. We talk specifically about gender-based violence, and also domestic violence.

We go about it by talking about the legality of things in Canada. We don't make sweeping condemnations based on morality because it can be relative in some places. When we talk about FGM, for example, we don't talk about whether it's ethical or not; we talk about the law in Canada.

We have conducted LGBT-specific orientation sessions for vulnerable populations. We talk about LGBT services available here in Canada. It depends if those services are available where the refugees are going, but we have some resources that we can provide for them. We talk about equality and non-discrimination, and what to do in case you are discriminated against. Although Canada is a very accepting place and more accepting than a lot of places, newcomers do face ongoing discrimination, especially from their own communities that they may move into.

The Chair: We need you to end there. Thank you very much.

Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you to all of the witnesses for their presentations.

Mr. Cecchetto, here is my first question for you. In terms of the pre-arrival training, one of the issues you mentioned is credential recognition. Do you share with the individuals the process of credential recognition and what they have to undertake in order to have their credentials recognized?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: Yes. We do talk about credentials, such as educational or professional credentials, and the overarching process of getting them recognized here, but we face a challenge in our COA sessions because we don't necessarily know where all the refugees are going.

If they're GARs—government assisted refugees—they might not be destined yet when we see them, and in one orientation room we may have a mix of people going to all the provinces. Some of those recognition processes are very different depending on the province that you go to. What we talk about are the resources that are available post-arrival and the settlement services that can help refugees who are newcomers to better navigate credential recognition processing.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I wonder whether you have any recommendations for the committee in this regard, because one of the most difficult things for newcomers, whether they're immigrants, refugees or otherwise, is credential recognition, and once they arrive here, the process is enormously difficult.

We hear all the time that in the Lower Mainland we have highly educated people working on the farms or, as an example, driving taxis and so on. The big question is, what can Canada do, no matter what province or territory we are in, to address this issue? What can be done and what needs to be done?

In fact, for all of our presenters, if you have recommendations in that regard, I would ask you to please submit them to the committee so that we can learn from you and then engage in that process. I think it's critically important.

Related to that issue, for refugees and for GARs in particular, there is the question of how documentation is often lost when they flee or leave. They really don't have the capacity to even show their credentials. I've had one person come to my office who had lost all of their documentation. In fact, the institution where they got their credentials was bombed. It doesn't exist anymore. There's no way, no how that they could get that recognition. What do you do in that scenario, right? We're talking about a person who has earned their Ph.D. That's a bit of a thing. In that regard, how do we address this issue as well?

I don't know if anybody has suggestions on how we can address this. To me, this is a critical aspect of recognizing the talent and utilizing that talent here in Canada. I would ask you folks to table any suggestions you might have.

I do want to move along to the other two sets of witnesses that I've heard, but first I think I saw a hand.

Is that correct, Ms. Abdi-Aden?

• (1720)

Ms. Roukya Abdi-Aden (Administrator, National Cooperation, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité Canada): Yes.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: If you want to jump in quickly, please do. I'm then going to go to Queenie.

[Translation]

Ms. Roukya Abdi-Aden: In 80% of cases, those to whom we provided pre-departure services were in regulated professions. We very quickly faced this issue particularly when it came to veterinarians or engineers who had to enter the labour market. We provided them with personalized services. That is one of the things that worked very well.

Depending on their province of destination, we prepared a number of tools. It is important that these people find out, before they leave, which integration processes are specific to their profession. They must be given all the necessary information and support before they arrive. For example, they had to prepare for certain exams and for this whole process. The idea was also to bring them into contact with the community, in the case of certain regulated professions.

People very often thanked us. When they arrive unprepared, they end up in a vicious circle: they accept the fact that they cannot practise their profession and are ready to take the first job that comes along. However, because of the pre-departure services, they knew what was in store for them.

At the same time, we have created opportunities for them to make other career choices. For example, if a person who was a doctor could not practise the profession right away, we would suggest that they stay in the same field as their profession, in the health care system. The person then had time to catch up and do evaluations. This could help them avoid a vicious cycle and becoming a taxi driver, for example.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Just on that score, the practices you've engaged in or the best practices you think the government should adopt across the country would be useful information, if you could submit it to the committee.

I'll give you one example from the province of British Columbia. We have a shortfall of doctors. In fact, there were doctors who came in who could not get their credentials recognized. There was a program that the government could have funded but unfortunately didn't. It would have funded each spot at \$60,000 to assess those doctors on the ground as though they were residents in a hospital, and then make the determination on their ability to do the job. If they were able to pass within that period, they would be given the credentials and would not have to go through the other process, and that would have met our doctor shortage.

I welcome any suggestions you might have in that regard.

I'm now going to switch to Queenie on that question, as well as on something I think is important—the funding differences between provinces and territories for the level of training. You touched on that, Queenie, and I wonder if you would share with our committee the importance of both equitable and high-level funding, because that's what helps the newcomers reach beyond minimum-wage jobs.

Ms. Queenie Choo: Absolutely. Thank you MP Kwan.

I think this is very important. We look across Canada at not just recruiting the brightest and the smartest people to come, but also at a way to retain them. One of the strategies for that is to ensure there are resources available across our provinces and territories to ensure the settlement program is not only tailor-made to individual needs, but also that it is equitable across our country in order to retain those talents across the country.

Right now there are some differences among jurisdictions, and I think it is important to look across the board to retain our talents and our newcomers when they arrive in Canada.

• (1725)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I have another question.

The Chair: You have half a minute.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: In regard to the pre-arrival training sessions, do you provide information to the newcomers about family reunification? I've had scores of refugees who come in knowing nothing about the one-year window of opportunity program and so on, and they're desperate to unite with their family members.

Is that information provided to them? Do you have a recommendation to government on how that program should be adjusted, and on how the definition of “families” should perhaps be adjusted in order to really meet the needs of these new arrivals?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: IOM provides assistance to IRCC to fill out certain forms, for example in the adjudication process. Also, through all stages, whether it's medical or pre-departure, we outline the necessity that refugees declare all family members so that they can avail themselves of the one-year window program.

We do see that some people are worried about declaring certain family members. There can be persistent misinformation among

refugee populations that declaring a family member would prolong their case. Those are persistent myths that we're trying to dispel.

The Chair: I'm afraid I need to stop you there. Thanks.

Mr. Sarai.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Ayoub.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: The first question is for Mr. Cecchetto.

Are India, the Philippines and China included in the countries that you give pre-arrival services to?

Mr. Matthew Cecchetto: In the last calendar year, 2018, the number of refugees who left China was four, so it's not very high. India was higher, and we do multiple sessions in India. As for the Philippines, we did hold a small session there in the last calendar year as well, but the number there is also very small.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Ms. Choo, I just wanted to thank you. I was at one of the graduating programs of C.A.R.E., the one that trains women in the hospitality sector. It was funded by IRCC. It was very effective. I think almost everyone in that program had employment, and it was well received by employers as well as the women who took it.

Ms. Choo, what is the participation rate in your pre-arrival services?

Ms. Queenie Choo: Certainly. Last year we served over 5,600 newcomers. This year we are already on pace to exceed last year's number by 30%.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What countries are they predominantly from in terms of pre-arrival services?

Ms. Queenie Choo: They're from India, China, the Philippines and others.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: What strategies are you putting in place to reach these migrants before they depart?

Ms. Queenie Choo: That's a very good question. Thank you for asking it. We want to connect with them sooner rather than later. A lot of it is word of mouth. I personally went to visit the Canadian visa office in Hong Kong, because they issue all the visas to those individuals who receive invitations to Canada. I visited them to make sure the program was known to people.

It is not a mandatory program, but I think it's a wonderful program to ensure that people can start off at the very beginning, at the get-go, before they come to Canada.

• (1730)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Do you see a marked difference between immigrants who come after attending or doing one of these pre-arrival programs versus those who have not?

Ms. Queenie Choo: Absolutely. Again, thank you for the question. I personally was an immigrant to Canada 38 years ago. I did not receive any services, and neither did I receive foreign credential recognition. I had to struggle through in my own way in terms of getting to know the country and getting to know the system.

I mean, we have these wonderful pre-arrival programs to assist people coming to Canada. Wouldn't that be a nice way to make sure that the information relevant to them—employment, health care, language, Canadian culture and systems—was provided to them prior to their coming to Canada? I think it would be such an asset to those individuals and help them gain knowledge about the country they decided to come to.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

Mr. Ayoub.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Thank you.

My questions are for Mr. Bigeau and Ms. Abdi-Aden.

I know you didn't get the grant you requested for pre-arrival services. Despite everything, the situation of francophone minorities outside Quebec seems to be improving. The Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has made an investment of \$40 million over the next five years.

What do you think about the strategy and plan related to those investments, which are particularly targeted at the francophone minority?

Mr. Jean-Guy Bigeau: I will first make a general comment, then I will give the floor to Ms. Abdi-Aden.

In response to the call for proposals, our project, which met the criteria exactly, sought to set up a one-stop shop to make the entire immigration process more efficient and seamless. That was the intent of our proposal. However, the decisions made were not entirely consistent with the criteria. The funding was spread around, so to speak, to increase efforts in the regions. There is an entry point, but the funding structure provides for regional entry points. This means that efforts might overlap. In our opinion, this will slow down the immigrants' progress.

It is therefore important to tighten or refocus the process and to ensure that the decisions made help immigrants integrate into Canada more smoothly. That was our plan for the project.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: We are still talking about \$40 million, which is more than before. We hope that this five-year investment will yield results.

Mr. Jean-Guy Bigeau: Absolutely.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: We have never invested more than that, and I wanted to know what impact that investment will have across Canada.

Ms. Abdi-Aden, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Roukya Abdi-Aden: The investment is significant, but we must also ensure that the services are adequate. After all, we are dealing with people's lives. When immigrants arrive in Canada, they

have needs, and we must ensure that we invest in the right place to meet them, because that is what will make the difference.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Of course.

Ms. Roukya Abdi-Aden: Our services must be more efficient and much more client-oriented. The language issue matters, but so does the effectiveness of the services. We must therefore ensure that we provide services that produce results. Otherwise, the immigrants will go elsewhere.

When we offered our pre-departure services, we noticed that we were not the only francophone service providers. There were also bilingual services. Immigrants do their research before or after arrival, they check what services are available. If our French-language services do not meet the needs of immigrants, they will look elsewhere.

In addition, with Express Entry being introduced, we noticed that people were becoming more and more educated and that their English-language training was quite extensive. Most of the time, they are almost bilingual, so they can go to any community.

I think we must consider these factors to ensure that the services we provide in the communities are really focused. They are no longer the same immigrants we received a few years ago. We must bear that in mind as well.

• (1735)

The Chair: Mr. Ayoub, ask a very short question, please. You only have a few seconds left.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: I understand that integrating francophone immigrants into a francophone minority environment is limited to unilingual francophones. Francophones who go to Calgary or Vancouver will still need a minimum or even a maximum level of English: they will not be able to live in French only.

Ms. Roukya Abdi-Aden: That's the reality. Newcomers are increasingly bilingual, unlike a few years ago. They may not have a sufficiently functional level for a job, but they have master's degrees or doctorates. In addition, globalization is making people more and more multilingual. We must bear that in mind.

In the case of francophone immigration, how will we ensure that francophones who also speak other languages continue to define themselves as francophones? This can be achieved with the services we provide and with our approach in meeting their specific needs.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you all.

Thank you for your presentations and for your contributions today.

[*English*]

The meeting is now adjourned.

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