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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, February 28, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, February 28, 2019

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)):** Good morning. Seeing a quorum, I am now going to call this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), this is meeting number 147 of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to study migration challenges and opportunities for Canada in the 21st century.

Thank you to our witnesses. I'm very glad to see you here as we look at several issues. Some of you have been with us before and some have not.

I usually like to begin with those coming to us by video conference, just in case we have a technical problem.

I think we'll begin with Mr. Syed Hussan, from the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. I believe he has appeared before us on this study already. Then we'll go to Superior Weanlings Ltd., Dennis Kuijpers.

Mr. Hussan.

**Mr. Syed Hussan (Coordinator, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change):** Good afternoon. As you introduced me, I am the co-founder and coordinator of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, and also of Migrant Rights Network. Together, we aim to represent all of the self-organized migrant and refugee groups in the country.

Today, on behalf of our groups, we want to make one primary recommendation, and that is that all low-wage temporary foreign workers must be able to come to the country with full, permanent resident status on arrival, with their families.

In addition, we call for permanent residency status for migrant and documented workers already in the country, open or sectoral work permits, and full access to health care, education, national housing standards, recruiter regulation, employment insurance, pensions and the ability for workers to negotiate their own contracts.

I'm going to walk you through the life of an average worker, so you get a sense of what we're talking about.

Most workers, outside of the seasonal agricultural worker program, SAWP, come to the country having paid a recruiter between one and two years' salary, in home country terms, which is

anywhere between \$2,000 and \$10,000. It's important to note that these recruiters are Canadian. This is not a foreign issue.

In order to pay this money, the workers have to take on loans, as do their families, which means that when they arrive, they are already under economic duress. This makes it very difficult for them to assert very basic rights. In many cases, the jobs promised either do not exist, or, if they do, are not as promised. This is why we ask Canada to create model regulations for its provinces that specifically allow for licensing of recruiters and registering of employers, and that hold them jointly and financially liable for all recruiter fees.

Now, all of these workers are on employer-specific permits; that is, they are tied to their employers. Changing jobs requires finding a new employer, who may need to apply for a labour market impact assessment, at a cost of \$1,000. Then the workers may need to apply for a work permit. This entire process, from job search to starting the job, can be anywhere between three to six months, or up to a year. During this time, workers are not allowed to work, and generally cannot access employment insurance. With high debts from having to keep two households, temporary foreign workers tied to employers by work permits are essentially indentured. This is a system of indentured servitude.

The seasonal agricultural worker program contract allows employers to defer days off to a more opportune time. We have many farm-worker members across the country who, in peak season, work three straight months without a single day off. The subcontract and the TFW contract are supposed to ensure that workers are paid hourly, but we know that in at least a quarter of all cases, workers are doing piecework. They are being paid on the basis of the baskets of fruits or vegetables they pick. As a result, many workers are making below minimum wage.

In our experience, an average farm worker, at the end of a two-year period, has had \$20,000 in unpaid wages stolen from them. For a domestic worker, that's almost \$10,000. This is why we insist that migrant workers must have a seat at the table when these contracts are being designed, because as currently imagined, they are essentially exploitative.

Current labour laws, which are largely provincial, exclude agricultural workers from minimum wage, overtime pay and unionization. Domestic workers live in employers' homes. There's no clear start or end time to the work. As a result, our members are sometimes working 10 to 12 hours a day. At other times, they are working only four to five hours a day, but are being paid in a 10- to 12-hour period for only seven hours. When they are working four to five hours, they cannot have their needs met.

Most temporary foreign workers live in employer-provided housing, without privacy, with curfews and unable to control what they eat. Workers in agriculture are housed with pesticides. Domestic workers are sleeping on living-room floors, without having a separate room. I just recently spoke to a domestic worker who told me that her employers only allow her to shower in the gymnasium in their condo. For a week, when there was no water in the gym, she did not shower. This is not an unlikely story. These are common things. This is why we insist on a national housing standard for all employer-provided housing, rather than the disparate system that currently exists.

When workers are injured on their jobs, particularly in agriculture, they face de facto medical repatriation. You are injured here, but you are sent home to die. Therefore, we call for an end to unilateral removal of migrant workers, particularly due to medical repatriation. We call for full universal access to health care, without the three-month wait period.

● (1540)

When workers leave or they're between jobs, they're often unable to get basic employment insurance or pensions. We're calling on Canada to ensure that particularly seasonal agricultural workers and other workers get access to pensions, parental benefits, EI and supports after injuries, even after they have left the country. We need portable benefits, benefits that can travel between countries.

Recently, we've seen a tremendous increase in funding in ESDC and CBSA to do labour enforcement. Let me be perfectly clear: the ESDC is completely incapable, as it's currently designed, to deal with worker rights violations. There are no complaints. There are no forms. There's no training for the officers. We believe that there must be proactive enforcement, but the current system, including what they're doing in B.C., is the wrong direction, and we need to go back to the beginning and start over.

By and large, however, the fundamental issue is permanent resident status on arrival.

After years of organizing, the Liberal government recently announced regulations to create an open work permit for workers facing abuse. What's most important about this is that there's finally an acceptance from the government that temporary immigration and tied work permits create the conditions of risk and abuse. That's great, but we don't need a system where certain workers have to apply for the work permits and then get them after they've been abused. We need just open work permits for everyone.

As it's currently designed, we've identified 13 major gaps in the regulation, and we have not seen the timeline for dealing with them. This includes discretion for officers to decide what is abuse, while they've received no training on labour violations. We insist that this program not be discretionary and that the permits should be minimum one year, be renewable, give access to health care, be processed in an expedited manner, and not include sex workers and seasonal agricultural workers.

The immigration minister also announced just last Saturday a new caregiver program with sectoral permits and allowing for family members to accompany workers. This is welcome news, provided it is not accompanied by regressive measures. We have a media

announcement and no details. We will be watching closely to see the devil in said details, but we call for such permits, sectoral and open work permits, and family reunification, so workers come to the country with their families, and for it to cover all temporary foreign workers, not just caregivers.

An interim program has also been announced for the tens of thousands of workers who were left out by the Conservative government's discriminatory caregiver program launched in 2014.

**The Chair:** I just need you to draw to a conclusion, please.

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** The interim program needs to be changed so that it includes all the workers.

There's more to say, but I will leave it at that, and I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Very good, thank you.

Mr. Kuijpers.

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers (Owner, Farming, Superior Weanlings Ltd.):** Thank you.

Superior Weanlings is a hog-farrowing operation located in the Prairie View municipality in the town of Birtle in Manitoba.

The farm has been owned and operated by James Sanders since 1994. In 2016 James sold half the shares to me with an option to buy the remainder when financing can be obtained.

Over time it has become steadily more difficult to find and train staff in agriculture, especially for the hog sector. Young Canadians generally do not want to do this type of work or even live in a rural area removed from larger population centres.

In 2006, we started using the temporary foreign worker program to attract staff. This was a godsend for us. We were able to attract hard-working reliable people, most of whom wanted to live in a rural area.

Although using the program has always been somewhat of a challenge as far as meeting evolving government requirements is concerned, the difficulties have never been as enormous as they are now. If a solution cannot be found, our farm will have to close its doors. This will be a pity. Businesses like ours provide jobs in rural, isolated communities. We buy grain from local farmers as well as many inputs from rural businesses. Our employees, including the temporary foreign workers, pay taxes. If the farm could keep its staff levels where they need to be, we would be more profitable and pay more in corporate taxes. Our temporary foreign workers are young and healthy people and are unlikely to be drawing on Canada's social safety programs.

The biggest complaint we have with the temporary foreign worker program right now is with respect to the role that embassies play in this process. Recently the embassy in Kiev refused to grant a visa to a prospective employee. The reason given was that the officer felt the applicant did not have significant funds. This is both ridiculous and unacceptable. Superior Weanlings has to pay all travel costs from the applicant's country of residence to our place of work. If the employee does not stay for any reason whatsoever, we must pay all travel costs for his return. The rules are quite clear. Is the officer uninformed as to the rules? Are there additional parameters being kept from us? If so, why are we not being told? If we knew what these secret requirements were perhaps we would be able to make efforts to satisfy them.

We do not hire temporary foreign workers in an effort to pay less money than we would have to pay Canadians. We are required by Service Canada to pay the prevailing wage as determined by them. Last year we spent approximately \$6,000 for a professional firm to assist us with the paperwork involving foreign worker applications. We used to do this ourselves but it changes so often and has become so much more complex that we had to seek help. We spend over \$10,000 on airfare and hotels to bring temporary foreign workers to and from Canada. We have to drive to Winnipeg to pick up workers when they arrive in the country, and a good deal of time is needed to assist them with obtaining necessary documents such as social insurance numbers and Manitoba medical numbers. We also provide housing free of charge.

Recently Service Canada did an audit on one of our temporary workers. The particular person happened to be an exceptionally talented and capable individual. Although the required pay rate by Service Canada was \$12.50 per hour, we had increased his pay to \$22 per hour over a two-and-a-half-year time frame. We were told this was not allowed. We should have tried to find a Canadian if the job was at this rate, and if we were unable to do so, then we should have applied for a new LMIA.

Because this particular employee was only a week or two short of receiving his permanent resident status, no action was taken in this instance. We now have another employee who we want to promote and pay more. We have had to apply all over again. We cannot understand the logic of this.

• (1545)

When we advertise in Canada, we do not ask for relevant work experience or education. We are willing to train. These are also the parameters approved to hire foreign workers. An IRCC employee recently refused an applicant because he thought she lacked enough relevant experience.

We spend a great deal of time and money to hire these workers. We interview them via Skype, we check their references and we go through all of the hoops required by Service Canada. The time it takes from starting the requirements to the time before the prospective employee arrives is lengthy. It is usually between six months and a year.

For an unnamed officer at an embassy to arbitrarily dismiss the whole effort is just wrong. We understand that they have to make police reports and do other due diligence, but this case is nothing like that.

Service Canada has adopted a very strict regime regarding the housing we provide to temporary foreign workers. Every year the accommodations that we provide for our workers must be inspected by the fire commissioner's office. This requirement was instituted a few years ago.

We understand that a few employers have provided substandard accommodations. The response was heavy-handed and punished the vast majority of employers, who understand that decent housing is an important ingredient to keeping staff satisfied. Service Canada could have created a code of requirement and a set of sanctions, such as fines, for violations.

The fear of random inspections would probably keep unscrupulous employers in line. Instead, each employer must pay \$400 every year for every residence. If all rental accommodations in Canada had to face such scrutiny, the backlash would be substantial. We ask to be subject to the same rules and regulations to which other rental accommodations are subject.

Our final complaint is the length of time it takes to respond to an LMIA request.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** I need you to wrap up fairly quickly, please. Thank you.

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** It should not take more than two weeks after we submit proof of advertising and application. We are told there is a huge backlog. If that's the case, hire more staff and charge a reasonable processing fee of less than \$250 per employee. If Service Canada cannot make this revenue-neutral, this commission should demand to know why. Bring back the expedited applications for all employers with a favourable track record.

Thank you for your time.

**The Chair:** Mr. McElhone.

**Mr. Edward McElhone (Owner/Operator, Fox Sand Farming Limited):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and standing committee members.

I am a third-generation farmer on our family farm. I'm 42 years old, with an agricultural university education and a young family. I farm with my father, who is 70 years of age and looking to retire. We grow ginseng, tobacco and cash crops on a total of 1,100 acres.

Combined, my father and I own nine farms and lease four others. Annually we employ 20 offshore Mexicans and 68 Canadian workers, plus contract labourers during peak seasons. Our employee hours in a total year rank in the neighbourhood of 73,000 man-hours, and our annual wages are over \$1 million.

We rely heavily on SAWP for our main labour force, because it's manual labour and because of the labour shortage in our area. SAWP has been great for us over the years. It has been beneficial, and we've been part of that program for more than 35 years.

Most of our offshore workers are here for up to eight months at a time. Some of them have been working for us for 25-plus years. We pay our offshore employees hourly wages to make sure that they are all making minimum wage per hour. Our bunkhouses are inspected annually and are most times nicer than what most people live in.

We dug into the temporary foreign worker program in 2014 to try to get somebody to help supervise the farms because of the growing paperwork. Since Dad is retiring, I need to spend more time in the office and doing the litigation part, and we need somebody to do my job. I do not have any family coming behind me; my girls are young.

After running job ads for several months with no valid responses, we turned to the temporary foreign worker program to find a suitable candidate. In the spring of 2015, the ServiceOntario office in Simcoe, Ontario told us we would never be able to bring in a temporary foreign worker because we do not qualify and a local labour source should suffice for our operation. While continuing to advertise for a farm supervisor, we received a response from an immigration consultant in Toronto, who helped lead us to hiring Llewellyn.

We first started talking with Llewellyn the fall of 2016. He came for an on-site job interview in the spring of 2017, and in 2018 his work permit was rejected by the High Commission in South Africa after over three months of waiting, for the same reason the other gentleman mentioned: non-sufficient funds to support himself. Well, that doesn't really make sense, because he's coming here to work and has already put forth the money to come to do an on-site interview.

It took another three months to reapply and get his permit, and his family was finally able to get here in the spring in May 2018. The cost for us was over \$5,000 in fees, and for Llewellyn it was over \$10,000.

Right now, Llewellyn is working on our farm, and his wife works at a local medical centre doing books.

At this time I'd like to turn it over to Llewellyn.

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman (Supervisor, Fox Sand Farming Limited):** Thank you for this opportunity to be here.

Mr. Chair, of the reasons for my leaving South Africa and accepting this job here, the first is that it was better for my children's education. Where I come from, it's not very good at this moment. The violence against us is not good. In my close family, I had six murders—grandparents, a nephew and three uncles.

As for suggestions, one is the process of the paperwork. Since Ted and I started talking until I got here, it took over two years. I think there must be an easier way.

For example, my friend recently decided to go to New Zealand. He did it himself and it took him three months and he did it all online.

I had to go through the same things as he did—police clearance, medical aids and all that—and mine took over two years.

The other thing is that the work permit is for two years. If it's possible, it should be lengthened it to give us enough time for the permanent residency, because I have been here almost a year now, so I have a year left.

I have three sons. One is 21, one is 19 and one is 16. The oldest one is at home because he can't get a student visa. The other two are in high school and they aren't allowed to work because I am on a worker's permit, so they sit at home. I want to be honest. It's not a good thing for boys to sit at home. Why are they not allowed to work, enough hours but not too much?

I left South Africa for a reason, and I think you can see my reason. I love South Africa, I love the bush and I love everything there, but because of reasons out of my control, we decided to come here, and I brought my whole family with me. I have decided to stay here.

That's why I came out of my own world when I phoned Ted and I told him in 2017, "Listen, before I accept your offer, I am coming to see you on my own cost." I came here and I spent the week with him on the farm to see how it works. They treated me well and I thought, "Well, that's for me." I went back home and we sold everything. I have nothing left back at home. My home is here now.

My kids are happy in school. Where I come from, my kids played rugby. Here we play football. Both my youngest boys played on their high school football team—first team, but you call it senior team. My youngest boy was rookie of the year. If they are happy, I am happy and my wife is happy. We are all happy.

Thank you very much.

•(1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you, and maybe we'll say the same.

We will begin with Mr. Tabbara, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I know it's not easy to pack up and leave and start a whole new life in another country without the support systems that were around you before. I really want to thank you and welcome you here.

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I want to ask you if you can maybe go into a little more detail. You said that, for New Zealand, it takes about a couple of months to get immigration, or relatively more quickly, but it took you around two years.

Can you just explain, from the beginning, the process you went through?

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** How did I come to get here?

I saw an ad in the local agricultural magazine in South Africa, a consultant offering jobs in Canada. The owner is also an ex-South African, but he is a Canadian citizen now.

I made an appointment. He goes to South Africa three or four times a year and meets people. I went to see him and gave him my resumé. He said, "Okay", and he would try to find me a job.

It wasn't that long. He saw Ted's ad and we got connected. Ted and I had a Skype interview and then the paperwork started.

Then they wanted this, and then they wanted that. My wife did most of the paperwork. All I knew at that stage was that I told her, "Listen, this is never going to stop because every other day they want some other papers. What else do they want? They know everything, almost." The most annoying thing on the program....

Then I came and saw Ted. We went back, so the LMIA started and then the work permit. That was the thing that was the biggest problem. We got rejected, and the reason we got rejected was not valid, because in the program under which I was applying to come to Canada, I did not even give bank statements on my application. That was not required.

• (1600)

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** They refused you based on bank statements?

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** They said I did not have enough money to support myself while I was in Canada, but in the program that I was coming in on, I did not even have to submit paperwork regarding my bank statements. I came here, I landed and I started working. I didn't need that backup money. Then when we reapplied, all of a sudden, like magic, I was accepted. The sad thing about that, sir, is that because I got rejected and had to reapply, I had to pay again. Otherwise, no sugar; nothing, my friend. I had to pay again. As I told Ted, yes, you can talk about \$1,500 as being a lot of money, but it's not a lot; if you take the currency where I come from, though, the sum of \$1,500 is a lot of money.

Anyway, luckily for me and my wife, we were able to pay all of that stuff. We didn't have any financial problems. I know that other people do, though, and that it's a problem for them. That's why they won't apply. It's too expensive.

I want to be honest; I don't know who it is, but at the embassy in South Africa, the guy who's checking those papers—I think there is the problem. If he had rejected me on my way of coming into Canada, then I would not have been rejected the first time.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thank you.

Mr. McElhone, what did you do when you needed someone to work on your farm? First you tried to look for talent within Ontario, within Canada.

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yes. Correct.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Where did you place those ads?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** We're constantly running job ads on Job Bank, Kijiji and Indeed. We've also branched out and done newspapers, and even some reserves, going to places where people have farming experience and who could use a job. At the end of the day, we're willing to train, but if you're bringing in somebody who's never seen a farm before, it's not advantageous to throw them into a supervisory role.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Absolutely. Our government has put forward a northern and rural pilot program, which will help alleviate some of the pressures that industry is facing.

Mr. Hussan, the immigration stream for low-wage positions has caps limiting the number of foreign workers who can be hired. Are these caps hindering the sector's labour demands? A lot of times we're seeing skilled workers who will get categorized as low-skilled.

I would argue on the contrary, but we see a lot of skill shortages here, especially in the trades. Are you seeing in our system that it's kind of a hindrance or a barrier for these individuals to immigrate to Canada, as you've seen in your line of work?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** There are a couple of things here. First, we're talking about different programs right now. The gentleman who was speaking before is in a high-wage program where people can come here with their families and have access to permanent residency. Most temporary foreign workers do not have those rights, and they should have those rights. I just want us to be clear on what we're talking about.

Now, a number of caps apply. If you have a workplace with more than a certain number of workers, then you can't have more than a certain percentage of your workforce as temporary foreign workers. There are also caps on the length of the permits. For our members, who are all temporary foreign workers, the primary issue is that it makes it harder for them to change jobs. There is a limit on the number of jobs that are available, so if you want to leave a bad job, it's very difficult in a particular area because another factory has already reached its cap. As workers are forced to work for only employer-specific permits, it's very difficult to change jobs. That's the biggest concern we see, which is why, if there were open permits, people would be able to leave bad jobs. That's the primary issue. There's no labour mobility.

• (1605)

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** So you would have liked—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, I need to end you there.

I'll give Mr. Maguire and Ms. Kwan a little more time to make up for that.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the witnesses as well.

Mr. Kuijpers, I'd like to ask you this. There's been a much higher denial rate in the work permits issued by Canadian visa officials in the last few years. In many circumstances the farmer has spent, as you said, thousands of dollars and their LMIA was approved, but the Canadian visa official denied the work permit.

For our report, should we be looking further into this growing trend of work permit denials, and find ways to alleviate the denials from happening?

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** Surely we need to deal with this. It's hurting. It's hurting the production of my farm, as I described. It's pushing our entire industry down by being less competitive compared to hog operations in the States. It's important for the rural economy that farms are able to operate. It's sad to say, but there's just way too much bureaucracy.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** You're on the short test. Thank you.

A lot of people can apply for the temporary foreign worker program through the provincial nominee program. I just want to find some kind of a permanent solution so that we can eliminate some of the labour gap that has been faced throughout the agricultural industry.

Do you recommend that we should create a pathway for farmers and agricultural businesses to sponsor and assist their employees to get permanent residency in Canada?

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** Sure. Yes.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you. That's pretty clear.

I want to ask Mr. McElhone the same thing.

There's no specific pathway for permanent residency for temporary foreign workers here in Canada now. Should we recommend to the IRCC that, after a certain number of years, they close the gap in the labour shortage that we have presently, a big one, in agriculture, that there be a clear pathway to permanent residency for individuals such as Llewellyn?

I appreciate the fact that you're both here with us today and that circumstances worked out well between the two of you. Can you just elaborate on how you see that working?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** I do believe there should be a clearer path right now. To nominate somebody to come in, to farm in our area, we have to have at least three full-time employees. For farming a seasonal operation, where the majority of our crops are harvested and the majority of our work is...in less than eight months, it's hard to have three people who work, as it's dictated, a minimum of 35 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. It's hard for a farm operation to meet that standard. We're seasonal. We have peak times. We have people who are full-time, but they don't work 30-something hours in the off-season, in the winter. Little things like that need to be looked at to compensate for the fact that every bit of farming is seasonal. No matter whether it's birds or livestock, you have higher peak seasons that require more labour and more work, and times that don't. If there's an average, then we would have six people who qualify, not just three.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Having farmed all my life, I understand your circumstance. I've spoken to a lot of farmers about this LMIA process and they're upset with the long wait times that we've had.

Should Service Canada have a guaranteed turnaround time for these applications?

• (1610)

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** That would be great.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** And what would you suggest as acceptable?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Even if it were a couple of months, tops.... If it were less, that would be great. Even for SAWP, it used to take three to four months; now this past year it was less than two. So things are starting to look up there, but as far as the temporary foreign worker is concerned, it is a long, dragged-out process.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Yes, I've talked to people who have taken six months to a year—

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yes.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** —and have had to wait under those circumstances, so I appreciate that as well.

If that's the case, should we be urging Service Canada to provide, in our report, greater transparency in those inspections? There are inspections by inspectors in our area and sometimes they have no knowledge when they arrive at the farm, I've been told, of what

specific allegations were made about the farmer. Therefore the inspectors don't even know what they are looking for. In one circumstance, an inspector came out to their operation and admitted they had never been on a farm before.

I think there needs to be something there, but I'd like you to indicate what you think we should do to provide greater transparency in these inspections, to institute an appeal process not just for the employer, but for the employee as well, and to urge that all these inspectors have a basic understanding of the agriculture industry. Can you elaborate on that?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yes. I did go through an integrity audit a year and a half ago. No offence to her, but the person who came out and investigated could not speak a word of Spanish, but she interviewed 19 Spanish-speaking Mexicans. A lot of them don't speak much English, or very little. She was asking them questions behind closed doors and my guys walked out of their meeting shaking their heads, saying they had no idea what she was talking about.

That said, the inspector had no idea; she had never been on a farm. She got in my truck to drive to the different work locations and said that was the first time she'd been in a pickup truck. Unfortunately, she was out of her element.

I have not had any word from my inspectors since February 22 of last year. Right now, as far as I know, my inspection is still ongoing and I haven't heard a single thing in over a year. Therefore, there needs to be a bit of transparency to the fact that my livelihood, my operation, was dictated by that inspection.

I did get an LMIA last year, very late. I jumped through a lot of hoops. Some of our workers came two months late. We were able to make it work, but that said, my inspector didn't ever talk to me or answer me. I had over 50 phone calls and not one returned.

Yes, there needs to be a little transparency and some knowledge that this is a business.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'll just interrupt you there, because I have one more question to get in.

The government just announced the rural and remote immigration pilot program, and there have been some unanswered questions in that. When people look at the criteria, there are a lot of concerns from the farmers I've spoken to.

Even in southern Ontario, in the heartland of agriculture in the province, they're locked out because of the criteria. Therefore, what should we recommend to IRCC in order to make all of rural southern Ontario eligible for that program? Should we just cover the whole region? If having a 75-kilometre radius to a city of 100,000 people excludes you, that covers pretty well all of southern Ontario, or southwestern Ontario at least. Can you elaborate on that?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** In the little piece of paradise in which we live, there are a lot of veggies, a lot of labour-intensive crops and a lot of family farms. Their farms aren't thousands of acres. The average farm is 150 acres.

That said, yes, there's a need to tap into programs, but as you said, we don't qualify. We checked and we don't qualify.



Well, we're farming. If it's a temporary foreign worker and it's to help rural communities, I'm rural. I look outside and I don't have neighbours; I have fields and trees. I'm as rural as it gets, but I don't qualify.

If they're going to call it a rural and remote program, they need to either adjust it or redefine it, because I live in rural Ontario and I don't qualify.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to stop you there. We're quite a bit over the time.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you to all the witnesses.

I'm going to start off with Syed.

You were cut off in your opening statement. I just want to give you a chance to complete that. Perhaps you could spend a minute or so on finishing that, and then I want to ask some questions.

• (1615)

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** Just in addition, on the caregiver program, right now the interim program that has been created excludes workers who are undocumented. It requires one year of work experience, which many caregivers will not be able to get. As currently defined, it's actually going to shut out a lot of workers who it is supposed to meet. It's only a three-month window, from March 4, so for the next three months. We're on a very tight timeline and we really need it changed.

Lastly, we need Canada to actually follow international conventions on the rights of migrant workers. That includes the 1990 UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention. If we were actually signatories to them and followed them, a lot of what we've heard in terms of how badly workers are being treated would be dealt with.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The temporary foreign workers pay into various programs. For example, they're taxed for employment insurance, which they're never really able to ever collect.

I'd like to get your comments on that with respect to that type of situation and structure. Is it a fair structure? How should it be adjusted?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** In Ontario a few years ago, we did research and saw that, in an eight-month period, farm workers paid \$350 million into EI, which they did not access. If you look at all HST, municipal taxes and federal taxes, migrant workers are actually subsidizing the social welfare system of this country because they don't access post-secondary education, and they can't get full health care, EI and CPP. It's an extremely unfair system. I think people want those basic rights and protections. Not only do they want those basic rights and protections, they've been subsidizing Canada for many years. It needs to be clarified that migrant workers are not a burden on the system, but rather are being exploited in this intersection between employers and government.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** In that context, the exploitation is coming from government because government is collecting those taxes and those

individuals are never actually able to benefit from the tax dollars to which they contribute.

I want to turn to this issue of the pathway to permanent residence. Landed status on arrival is what I heard you suggest is an important principle that should be followed. I agree with that. It seems to me that, if we have a scenario whereby we actually have a need for these workers, I suspect the employer would want them to stay too and not have to go through this LMIA process every time, which is onerous and expensive.

I want to turn to the employers' point of view on that. I wonder if you can share with us how the government should adjust its immigration policies to ensure that there is landed status for these workers, but which also minimizes the cost and the burden on you as well, in the interest of both the workers and the employers.

Mr. McElhone, we'll start with you.

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** I would agree with the fact that landed status is a good idea. There should be some check-in to that to make sure those people are not going to be a strain on society.

That being said, the way it works now, we've already tried permanent residency. We're submitting again. We're a year in and with any luck, we will have it before Llewellyn's two-year work permit is up.

Now I should be trying to fill out a permit to get another worker, in case he has to go back, so I have somebody else in place. It's a merry-go-round of filling out paperwork to make sure I have somebody to become a supervisor. In all honesty, to have trained somebody for two years only to watch him leave, if he's a good employee and willing to work and he's not a strain on society...why not let him stay? Why not make it an easier path to help him stay?

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'll turn to you, Mr. Opperman.

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** Like I said, when we came here we decided to stay. We are here. I have a problem. My oldest son is at home. As I'm not permanent resident, he can't go to university. He's sitting at home. He's 21 years old and he's enjoying life. It's heaven. He has a PlayStation in front of him and an Xbox, and life is good.

My second son is in grade 12. He's finishing at the end of this May. What then? He's not allowed to work. He can't go study. Then I'll have two sitting at home that I'm supporting. I don't think that's fair.

I've been here almost a year. When I started with that consultant at Canadian immigration, what was told to me was that, as soon as I get my work permit and I land here in Canada, they start with my permanent residency. That didn't happen.

• (1620)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** You would support landed status on arrival then—

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** Yes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** —because that would make a big difference for you in your life as well, as we heard from the employer and as we heard from Syed on their advocacy.

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** This is an ongoing debate, but for some reason, government has not acted on it. Frankly, I don't really understand why. If there is a number one recommendation, would this be it, in terms of making that landed status pathway real for the employees that the employers need?

Maybe just a quick go-around for everybody.

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yes.

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** I would agree with that, yes

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I can see people nodding. I need people to actually say something, because otherwise it won't be registered on the record.

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** I would say specifically it's granting landed status upon arrival. Migration is a permanent need; we need a permanent solution.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

Mr. Kuijpers. On that same question, is the answer yes?

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** Yes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I would just say, let the record show that all of the witnesses responded by saying that this is the number one priority: landed status upon arrival.

There is half a minute left. Should the government be acting on this now, or how much longer should we be waiting for something to be done?

**A voice:** Immediately.

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yesterday would have been good.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Immediately, yesterday.... And for the people on the video conferencing?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** The system is 53 years old. It should have happened 53 years ago.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Lastly, Mr. Kuijpers?

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** There is a disconnect between Service Canada and the IRCC. You should really address this and look at that as well.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. Zahid, you have seven minutes.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thanks to the witnesses.

My first question is for Mr. Hussan.

I know there have been suggestions to make changes to the temporary foreign worker program to make it easier for employers to bring in foreign workers. Of course, we need to also ensure that jobs are not taken that could be filled by qualified Canadians.

Could you please share your thoughts on how that balance can be struck and how, in a polarizing political environment, we can

maintain popular support for the sorts of tools that Canadian businesses are asking for?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** I think first and foremost the whole notion of temporary migration needs to be removed from the system. We need a single-tier immigration system. In a polarized environment, it's when you create these various sectors that you hear that "these people are stealing jobs" or "those people are jumping the queue", and you actually further polarize the system. We're seeing that already.

If you have single-tier immigration whereby everybody comes in—low-wage workers, high-wage workers, humanitarians, students, etc.—with permanent residency-related rights, it actually resolves the issue. You're trying to tweak an existing problem that has a fundamental flaw. The fundamental flaw is that the only way for most employers to profit is to have a worker tied to them, so you have to indenture workers to create that system of profit. Now, 53 years in, it's becoming embroiled. I think we need to pull way back and say—

• (1625)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** How do we keep a balance to make sure that those jobs are not filled by the temporary foreign workers?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** There are 300,000 permanent residents coming into the country each year. We don't know what jobs they do. There are 280,000 plus people who come in the international mobility program with open permits. We don't know what jobs they do. There are 312,000 plus international students who can work. We don't know what jobs they do.

Why are we talking about these 78,000—the smallest section of the temporary stream—and whether they will take jobs from Canadians? This is a completely nonsensical, non-factual and frankly inappropriate way to understand the system. We have 700,000 people here who are coming in temporarily, so this is not a question of citizens losing jobs to migrants. It's a question of our needing a single-tier immigration system.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** My next question is for Mr. McElhone.

How long have you been hiring temporary foreign workers in your company?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Mr. Llewellyn was our first temporary foreign worker. We had been part of SAWP, which is a stream that is considered to be different. My father was in it before me; we've been in it for 35 years. As far as the temporary foreign worker program on a work contract for two years is concerned, Mr. Llewellyn is the first one we have brought in.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Before these two years, then, you were not hiring temporary foreign workers?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** That's correct.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** There has been a discussion of the path to permanent resident status in the recently introduced changes to the caregiver program as a model to be considered. I agree that there should be a path to PR, because if you are good enough to work here, you are good enough to stay.

Do you have a sense, though, of how many want to stay and how many just want to come here? Sometimes some seasonal workers also come, save money and return home. What program changes are needed, if any, to better support those who are just looking to work here temporarily?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** I can't really answer much of that, because I don't know about the caregiver part of it.

As far as the other part of it goes, none of the employees we bring in through SAWP ever have an intention to stay. Over the years, we have never had any of them who wanted to stay in Canada. They all wanted to return home. I do know farmers who have, but very few who come through SAWP actually want to stay.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** They're only coming for seasonal work?

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** They're coming for seasonal work for up to eight months at a time through an LMIA. That is just specific to seasonal work. The temporary foreign worker is a two-year program. That's different. It's a higher skill.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Mr. Hussan, would you like to add to that?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** Permanent residency ensures rights. If people want to leave, they can leave. It's not about whether you can stay; it's the only way for people to get basic rights. That's how our system is structured. We're not saying let everyone stay. We're saying PR is the only way for people to get basic rights.

The second thing is, I would disagree. We have thousands of SAWP members across the country. By and large they all want the basic rights around minimum wage and overtime, they want their families to visit, they want basic health care, they want pensions, they want EI. All of that is only possible through the permanent residency system.

Are you saying that you've had workers for 35 years and none of them want to stay? Frankly, you don't know what you're talking about, because there are no workers who are coming for 35 years and then at the end of that don't want to have their families join them.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Mr. Tabbara wants to continue. He had a question.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I just wanted to mention this. You probably heard about the recent new caregiver program that our government put in place. That's ensuring that the caregivers who do come to Canada are able—as you mentioned in your testimony—to go from one employer to another, and they're not just strictly obliged to be with one employer.

What's your take on that?

**Mr. Syed Hussan:** I think the important thing is that's the announcement, but we haven't actually seen the forms. We haven't seen the details.

The government's announced sectoral permits. We support sectoral permits as an interim step to permanent residency on arrival. What was said earlier was that there's always been a path to permanent residence, but it includes.... It's not a path; it's a minefield. Most people can't get through it. We don't want a path, we want.... When I say "we", I mean thousands of migrant workers who are our members across the country. They want permanent resident status on

arrival, because any temporary stream creates the conditions for exploitation and abuse.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** That's the end.

Yes?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Just for clarification, the acronym SAWP has been used a lot. It's the seasonal agricultural worker program.

Also, I'd just like Mr. McElhone to clarify the issue of the 35 years that was mentioned there.

I had a question on open work permits that is relevant as well, if I could just get a written answer from everyone on that.

**Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.):** I provide my consent to go ahead.

**The Chair:** I'll give you three more minutes, and you can take in those two questions.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you very much.

The question that I would like each of the speakers today to answer is this. If the IRCC started issuing open work permits rather than the current practice of a worker signing a contract with one employer, would that cause any challenges to the employers?

Could you just reply to that in writing to us, or perhaps answer it in a moment?

I'll let Mr. McElhone answer that first, and if there's time, maybe we can have the answer to the question I asked before.

Pardon me. There are two streams there that we're talking about.

**Mr. Edward McElhone:** Yes. In SAWP, we've had workers for over 35 years, and I think I'd like to clarify that we have not always had the same workers. As to the gentleman saying that I don't know my workers, no, if I say they don't want to immigrate, they want to go home. They want to go to Mexico. They want nothing to do with staying here in the winter, and the reason we do know that for sure is that we have approached them over the years trying to say, "Listen; we will try to bring you in under the temporary foreign worker program." We tried with workers whom we had already worked with, to try to bring them in. None of them wanted to do it. They wanted to stay where they were, and that's why we went elsewhere.

To your second question, on the open work permit, I would be strongly against that. I've put a lot of time, effort and money into bringing Llewellyn here, and the only thing I have is the fact that he signed a work permit to work for me for two years. If he has an open work permit, I could spend all that money, he could be gone in the second week and where am I? I'd be starting at ground zero with nobody. The most important thing is the actual need for the labour. In Llewellyn's case, it was the need for a supervisor. I would be against that because then I would lose everything I'd worked for and not have anything to hold onto.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Mr. Kuijpers, could you respond to that as well, please?

**Mr. Dennis Kuijpers:** Our farm is extremely remote. If you open it up, we have a bigger chance of the employees moving to bigger cities. That can cause a direct problem for us if they don't fulfill their two-year work permit.

On top of that, I currently have LMIA's. The problem is the disconnection between Service Canada and IRCC. I have LMIA's, because we don't have any Canadians who want to come and do the job. You can't force Canadians to do the job.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** For clarity, the issue is that temporary foreign workers are coming in for the full year, whereas seasonal ag workers are only allowed to stay here for eight months.

**The Chair:** Mr. Opperman, did you want to add a comment?

**Mr. Llewellyn Opperman:** I agree with Mr. McElhone.

From my side, I don't have any problem. It's a big decision on his side, on my side—on any guy's side. I think it's nothing more than fair to commit for two years.

Really, I don't have a problem. Before you make a decision in life, you must look at it. If you make a decision, you've made that bed and you sleep in it. There's no way for chop and changing.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid we need to end there because we have another panel coming in.

Thank you all very much for your help with this.

We'll just suspend for a moment, and we'll change the panels to the next set of witnesses.

• (1630) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We're going to reconvene our meeting.

I thank officials from StatsCan and ESDC who are joining us today. I expect that you may be our last witnesses on this study, but you never know the will of the committee and what they would like to have. It's been a lengthy study.

We'll begin with StatsCan to give us the overview around labour market issues, and then we'll go to ESDC for more of a narrower cast.

**Ms. Josée Bégin (Director, Labour Statistics Division, Statistics Canada):** Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about some key observations on the labour market in Canada.

I would like to use my time to focus largely on issues of labour supply, with a focus on population aging, regional differences and immigration.

Labour supply is influenced by a number of factors, including population aging, immigration, internal migration and trends in the proportion of people in each age group who are either working or looking for work. Since 2008, as the large baby boom cohort has started to leave the labour market, we have seen a gradual but steady

decline in the labour force participation rate. In other words, the proportion of the population aged 15 and over, who are either working or looking for work, has been decreasing. In 2008, the participation rate was 68% and by 2018 it had fallen to 65%.

When we project the labour force participation rate in 2036, using a range of assumptions about future immigration levels, fertility rates and age-specific participation rates, we arrive at a number of findings that are relevant to the work of this committee.

First, we find that the number of people working or looking for work, as a proportion of the adult population, will decline, regardless of the assumptions used. In 2017, there were four people in the labour force for each person aged 65-plus not in the labour force. By 2036, we project this ratio to decrease to less than 3:1 at the Canada level and less than 2:1 in some regions, such as in the metropolitan regions of Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

Second, we project that the contribution of immigrants to the labour force will continue to increase. In 2016, one in four members of the labour force was born outside Canada. By 2036, this figure is likely to be one in three.

Third, our projections indicate significant regional differences in the ways that aging, immigration and internal migration will shape Canada's population and economy. For example, metropolitan regions are expected to continue to experience positive growth in the size of their labour force. This is partly as a result of the increased contribution of immigrants. These regions also benefit, in many cases, from internal migration, as young adults are attracted by strong labour markets. In contrast, by 2036, all non-metropolitan regions are projected to experience flat or negative growth in labour force participation.

When we consider how we can measure and evaluate the implications of these long-term projections, three sets of questions come to mind.

First, we must monitor the employment and labour force participation of immigrants. We have a broad range of surveys and data sources at our disposal, including the census and the labour force survey. We are able, for example, to measure various dimensions of the integration of immigrants into the labour market and examine the contribution of immigrants to employment growth.

Second, using our data on job vacancies, we are able to speak to regional variations in the balance between labour supply and demand and their implications for immigration. We are actively engaged with a number of partners, including ESDC, to conduct in-depth analyses of skills mismatches at the regional level.

Third, we are very conscious of the need to shed light not just on the quantity and location of the employment of Canadians, including immigrants, but on the quality and security of that employment.

Since 2008, looking at men aged 25 to 54, the gap between the participation rate of recent immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts has narrowed. The situation is less clear among immigrant women, where the participation gap has remained constant or closed only slightly, depending on the period of immigration examined.

• (1640)

In recent years, annual employment growth has been driven by increases among landed immigrants. In 2018, employment held steady among those born in Canada while among immigrants, employment grew by 200,000. A substantial portion of this increase was among those who landed in the last five years.

To better understand the important role that immigrants increasingly play in the Canadian labour market, I would like to highlight a few important observations about recent trends in the balance between labour supply and demand and associated questions about skills mismatches.

First, we have seen a clear tightening of labour markets. The unemployment rate has fallen substantially and has reached levels not seen since the 1970s. A corresponding increase has been observed in job vacancies.

Second, we see significant provincial variation in the ratio of unemployment to job vacancies. In British Columbia in the third quarter of 2018, there were just two unemployed people for each job vacancy. Similarly, in Ontario and Quebec there were approximately three. In a number of provinces, by contrast, there were more than five unemployed persons for each vacancy.

We see similar variations at the level of sub-provincial economic regions. That being said, in all regions, even those with the highest rate of unemployment, we see indications that employers are experiencing difficulty finding candidates with the appropriate skills and qualifications to fill some positions.

This is borne out by job vacancy statistics by occupation. In occupations associated with higher levels of education and specialized skills such as health, management and science-related occupations, more than 15% of vacancies take more than 90 days to fill. By contrast, a relatively low proportion of vacancies in sales and service take more than three months to fill.

Finally, I would like to mention quality of employment, which is an area of increasing focus for us at Statistics Canada. As population aging and migration continue to shape the labour force of regions and provinces over the next 20 years, it will be important to consider not just the match between the needs of employers and the skills of workers, but the quality of the resulting employment.

Quality of employment has a number of dimensions including employment security, income security and work-life balance. One dimension of employment security is the extent to which jobs are permanent or temporary. When we look at this through a regional lens, we see that a higher proportion of jobs are temporary in the regions with the highest unemployment rates. This is simply a reminder of the variety of challenges and pressures facing the labour market presently and into the future.

With that, Mr. Chair, I conclude my comments. I hope that this brief overview of some aspects of the Canadian labour market has been helpful to the committee, and I look forward to answering your questions.

• (1645)

**The Chair:** Thank you. We might need a weekend with you.

We'll go to Mr. Johnson.

**Mr. Stephen Johnson (Director General, Labour Market Information Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development):** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the labour market in Canada.

In my opening remarks, I will speak to the various sources of information available to assess shortages and labour market pressures and some of the analysis and products produced by ESDC, and then offer some brief insights into what we currently understand about labour shortages.

ESDC's mandate includes a focus on a skilled workforce, and an efficient and inclusive labour market in Canada. The department makes significant investments in a robust evidence base to understand the state of the Canadian labour market.

We work closely with Statistics Canada to undertake surveys of individuals and employers, and to collect administrative data from institutions including universities, colleges and polytechnics.

ESDC analyzes data that are used to administer the employment insurance program and the national job bank, for example, to gain insights into the availability of workers and employer demands across the country.

The department also relies on a network of regional economists who work in Service Canada to track and understand local realities from coast to coast to coast. They participate in the development and validation of the labour market information produced by ESDC.

Finally, ESDC provides funding to a range of industry sectors and associations, through the sectoral initiatives program, to produce forecasts and analyses of the specific human resource challenges and issues faced by sectors ranging from construction and mining, to tourism and the aerospace industry.

For example, the work of Buildforce was referenced recently at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities during its study into challenges faced by the construction industry in the Toronto and Hamilton area.

●(1650)

[English]

Defining and measuring labour market shortages is complex. In its simplest definition, a labour shortage exists when there are insufficient qualified workers to meet the labour needs of employers at the prevailing wage rates.

Empirical measurement of shortages is also a challenge. No single indicator or methodology exists. While some focus on supply and demand, specifically unemployment and job vacancies, others can consult a broader suite of indicators. The issue is further complicated by the size and diversity of Canada and its labour markets, as well as the dynamic and often transitory nature of shortages.

In support of its mandate and programs, ESDC produces a suite of internal and published analyses and assessments of labour market conditions, which serve different purposes and audiences. They are built from the core data of Statistics Canada, which we just heard a bit about, and use broadly accepted indicators and econometric models that assess and project labour market needs. These analyses vary along some standard dimensions: the level of geographic detail—national, provincial, local; the level of occupational precision; and the time horizon.

For example, ESDC produces short-term employment outlooks for 500 occupations, in 76 regions of the country—almost 35,000 potential data points. These outlooks, or employment prospects, provide a graphic representation of the relative availability of jobs, using a three-star scale for limited, fair and good prospects. This information is updated annually, and posted on the national Job Bank website.

On the other end of the spectrum, 10-year forecasts are produced by the Canadian occupational projection system, COPS, and are used for longer-term planning. They focus on long-term trends in labour supply and demand at the national level for 292 occupations.

These projections are updated every two years and produce estimates of total employment needs, retirements and attrition, new entrants into the labour force from the school system and immigration. The projections identify occupations expected to face labour-shortage or labour-surplus conditions over the next 10 years.

[Translation]

What do the data tell us? COPS has consistently projected higher-skill occupations requiring university education in health and applied sciences fields to be in shortage nationally. However, national findings often obscure regional and local differences.

At the sub-provincial level, the story can be very different depending on which part of the country you are looking at. For instance, picking up on the earlier presentation by Statistics Canada, recent statistics indicate that Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario are experiencing tightening labour markets.

But when you look below the provincial level, the most recent job vacancy statistics show the top 10 economic regions, with the highest growth rate in job vacancies, included seven in Quebec, one in British Columbia, and two in New Brunswick.

●(1655)

[English]

In addition to labour shortages, as mentioned by my colleague, there is also increasing discussion about skills shortages or skills mismatches, sometimes characterized as pockets of high unemployment alongside unmet demand in parts of the country. This is an area of increasing interest, and one in which we have somewhat limited information available. Some research and analysis has been undertaken to look at the skills associated with occupations in shortage, but there is more work to be done in this area.

A rough measure of skills, defined as the education and training required for specific jobs, exists within the occupational classification system. Using this classification in combination with those COPS projections indicates that over a 10-year horizon, labour shortages are more likely in occupations that require a higher level of formal education and training.

In other words, occupations that typically provide on-the-job training are forecast to have no labour shortages over that longer horizon at the national level, while occupations that typically require university or college encompass most forecast shortage areas.

In conclusion, ESDC is continuously working with a range of partners and stakeholders to develop and improve its understanding of labour market dynamics. I hope this brief overview has been helpful, and I would be pleased to answer any of your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Because you are both under time, I'm going to use the chair's prerogative to ask you a question, and then we'll turn to Ms. Zahid.

My dilemma is that I believe in evidence-based decision-making. I believe in data. I did a research doctorate. I get that we need to do these things, yet we have witnesses whose lived experience is very different from what we just heard, say, from ESDC. We have lived experiences from the carpenters' union, from the food union we had yesterday, from the Quebec chambers of commerce, from the Toronto Region Board of Trade that are pushing us into quite different stuff. There just seems to be a gap between what they're telling us and what this presentation—I'm not sure if it's what you're telling us or what the presentation seems to imply.

I'm just trying to figure out if you know that those people are saying it's not the university-trained...that we're looking for. It's the carpenters, and the electricians, and the tradespeople and the crane operators. It's the farm workers, it's this, etc., and I'm not getting that in either of the presentations. Our job is to serve them, so I'm trying to figure out if it is news to you that as politicians we're hearing something very different.

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** This is not news to us.

One of the messages I would like to leave for this committee is the notion that we have a range of sources of data, statistics and information insights. Those range from surveys to administrative data to sectors that ESDC funds to produce and to provide us with these results, to the regional economists I mentioned, who are in the field, and who collect and understand daily news about plants opening and shifts shutting down or starting up. There's a full range there.

Part of the challenge, if I may speak to my remarks, that I had in trying to synthesize what we know is that there's so much information. I chose the 10-year longer-term national projections, in part because they were easier and they show trends that also allow for a lot of dynamics in the labour market to play through.

I think what we hear, what you're hearing, what we read about, and what we understand is that with historically low unemployment rates, with tightening labour markets, employers in most parts of the country, in most sectors, are finding it more difficult, more competitive, to find and recruit workers—

**The Chair:** That's what I wanted to hear.

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** —and we would not dispute that.

Sometimes perhaps the labour market economists come out to talk about the notion of the shortage and whether it is a sustained structural shortage, or that we also need to look at the supply of labour and its ability to adapt and to adjust through geographic mobility, occupational mobility, training and so on.

Those longer-term trends—and my colleague is more of an expert in this area—have to take into account some of that ability for the labour market to adjust and for supply to respond.

**The Chair:** It's complex. I get it.

As MPs, we get employers in our offices, who are having to do an LMIA and they're going crazy. “Everyone knows I can't find someone, I talked to everybody, yet I'm going through this crazy process and spending money, but it's going to come back.” Is it just keeping the bureaucrats happy that we're doing this? Is it really protecting Canadians who need those jobs?

I don't want to have anecdotes because my office is anecdote and you're evidence.

You might want to respond, then Madam Bégin.

• (1700)

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** The agricultural sector is an interesting one. My colleagues and I have had a couple of meetings in recent weeks with the Agricultural Human Resource Council and others. If you look at those national projections I mentioned, they will show balance over the long term. If you look at some of the 76 economic regions and locations across the country, for general farm labourers and some very specific ones, it's a mixed story. You will see some pockets that show shortage, with indications of strong shortage, while others have balance, so that's where it is a more nuanced story, but it doesn't aggregate up well to a compelling story for that sector right now, through the data that we see.

There is a technical issue around temporary foreign workers that isn't necessarily picked up well in some of our statistics, so we are aware of that and working on that now.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Madam Bégin.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** At Statistics Canada, we collect statistics on labour force surveys every month, on employment insurance and employment by industry, and we also have a survey on job vacancies, so what you just said earlier, we have heard it as well.

Our job is to try to better understand how we can integrate those different indicators to help policy-makers and employers to make decisions or even for people to find jobs or to have more information about the labour market.

About a year and a half ago, for example, we had heard from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency about various messages they were hearing in the field about the labour market, which were contrary to what we were publishing.

We've been working closely with them, and maybe digging a little bit deeper into our statistics to try to make links between the various sources, whether it's survey data or administrative sources, to better inform them at that level.

**The Chair:** I'm learning that any national program is not going to be effective because everything needs to be targeted: urban, rural, regional. It's very much about smaller markets, as opposed to anything that's big. It's going to have to be very nimble.

I hope that there's some way that we can get some soft information. It just seems to me that the surveys must be missing something, but maybe not. At least test the surveys against our lived experiences of that. I'm ranting now.

Thank you committee for indulging me. I've only done this twice in three and a half years.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.):** You get a two-week break now.

**The Chair:** Yes.

Go ahead, Ms. Zahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thanks to our witnesses.

My first question is for Ms. Bégin, from Statistics Canada.

I'm looking at the deck you have provided us and you touched briefly on the participation rate and the gap that persists for immigrant women. The gap between immigrant men who have been here for five years and their Canadian-born counterparts has narrowed, but the gap persists for immigrant women.

Have you looked into this or have you collected some data about why this gap persists? Do you have some information in regard to that?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I will let my colleague, Vincent Dale, answer.

**Mr. Vincent Dale (Assistant Director, Labour Statistics Division, Statistics Canada):** We have done some research on this question. One part of the explanation is the origin of those women. They tend to come, increasingly, from countries where women are less likely to participate in the labour force. In order to fully understand the recent dynamics in the labour force, we're going to have to follow these women through administrative data. These are survey-based data, with relatively small sample sizes. There is an indication that something has been happening in the past five years, and we're going to have to follow that dynamic through administrative data, over the coming years.

• (1705)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Yes, because this shows that even for those who have been here for 10 years or more, there's a gap between them and their counterparts who were born in Canada. Is language a barrier, do you think?

**Mr. Vincent Dale:** I have to confess, I'm not an expert in this area, so we would have to put you in contact with some of our colleagues who have much more expertise on those types of questions.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Yes, I would like some more information. Being an immigrant woman myself, I would like to see why that is happening. I represent a riding where we have a big component of immigrant women.

**Mr. Vincent Dale:** Sure.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** My next question is for Mr. Johnson. In the data that Statistics Canada has provided, it is mentioned that there will be a decline in people looking for work in the coming 20 years. This decline will vary considerably between the regions, with the greatest decrease in rural areas of northern Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Do you think that the rural immigration pilot project announced recently by the Minister of Immigration will help towards this? Do you have any ideas about the program?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I'm not really familiar with that particular project. My main areas of responsibility are labour market information, the national Job Bank and ESDC. I don't know much about that design of the pilot.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** My question is for Statistics Canada. We know that the Canadian fertility rate is declining, and that we are an aging country, according to your data. Women are having children at older ages. The average age of mothers at childbirth was 30.8 years in 2016, and the average age for the first birth has risen to 29.2 years. They are having fewer children, as of 2016. The fertility rate has dropped to 1.54 children per woman. Given these demographic trends, can we meet current and projected future labour demands through our Canadian-born population alone?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I would say that our role is really to provide the evidence. I can't speculate as to whether or not this is sufficient, or what the impact would be. If you are interested in having more detailed information on our labour projections and fertility rates, we would gladly provide you with that.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Mr. Johnson, would you like to add to that?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I think the information presented by my colleagues from Statistics Canada demonstrates the important role that immigration has played recently, and is projected to play, in terms of overall workforce growth, and continuing to support

economic growth. The data shows a question around whether it's sufficient. Is it too little? Is it too much? It's inherently challenging, I think the committee would recognize.

One thing that we haven't mentioned yet today is that increasingly, we hear discussions around what's often described as the changing nature of work. In addition to long-standing demographic trends, or an aging population and globalization, is this notion of the fourth industrial revolution and the adoption of new technology, and to what extent the pace of that adoption will actually change both the number and nature of the skills being looked at. That has the potential to greatly influence and change our scenario and trajectory, moving forward.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** With regard to skilled and unskilled immigration, are there any models from other countries that you have examined that may offer models and innovations Canada should consider?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** Again, unfortunately, I'm not in a position to comment as an expert in that area. I'm in the skills and employment branch at Employment and Social Development Canada. I could speak a little bit about our transfers to provinces and territories and other things for adult training and skills training, but I don't have much background or expertise to provide the committee concerning immigration.

• (1710)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I want to reiterate what the chair indicated in his opening remarks. Some of the things I heard weren't exactly what I'm hearing on the ground in my tours of Canada concerning some industries, particularly—coming from an agricultural background myself—in agricultural areas.

We have great potential in this country for producing many products. Processing them is the shortfall. We're finding we need labour on both sides. We've done a good job of developing export markets for these products, but if we don't get them off our shores, some other country is going to do it.

I'm looking at the sentence in your concluding remarks, Mr. Johnson, "ESDC is continuously working with a range of partners and stakeholders to develop and improve its understanding of labour market dynamics."

I think there are some gaps here with regard to what we're hearing from witnesses, those who just came here today as well as others who have appeared before the committee before. My colleague, the chair of our committee, outlined this point very well in the comments he made. He called it a rant; I call it a fact-finding exercise. We're short thousands of people in some of these processing industries. That's what they're telling me, and I know my colleagues on the government side know it as well.



How do we fix that?

I had a bunch of questions here that I was going to table, but they really aren't meant for your area. Mr. Chair, I know we're wanting to wrap this up as much as we can, but there still seem to be some unanswered questions that you, I and our colleagues across the way may have. I'm wondering whether at some point we might ask someone back, whether from Services Canada or whoever the people may be to deal with some of the work permit issues we're dealing with.

I just put this forth to you and my fellow committee members. We can deal with it later.

**The Chair:** Just while you're on that point, we'll stop the clock for a minute. It seems to me that we tend to not do this work; HUMA does it. It is, though, affecting our committee work, and we may want to have the kind of briefing we would have from IRCC on the basics of the programs and the way they work. It's not our specialty, but it is affecting IRCC.

We are just trying to work out how we might need some more time on this; that's all we were doing. We'll hold that thought, but I think it might be helpful for us to have a little bit more from ESDC on this issue, so we'll try to do something.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Okay.

My colleague from British Columbia has a few questions.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your having me at the committee and my colleague's letting me share some of the time.

I came prepared to ask a few more question on the temporary foreign worker program.

For example, in the Okanagan valley and the Similkameen valley as well, I had complaints last year that many farmers were unable to have their temporary foreign worker permits processed on a timely basis because of issues, apparently, with the embassy that was meant to process them. This caused millions of dollars in crop damage because they weren't able to pick successfully.

This may not be the right committee or the right group to study this, but I think it's really important that the timeliness...especially given the seasonal agricultural worker program and just its name, "seasonal". It's very important for us to be able to study this.

One thing in the Okanagan that has also come to my attention is that there are great facilities, such as Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan. I'd therefore ask Statistics Canada this question.

One challenge that many of the university professors have brought to me is that it's difficult to access some of your raw data so that they can combine it in a way that's meaningful for dealing with some of the skills and labour shortages specifically in the Okanagan.

I'm not sure whether you're able to pass this on or how you would like to respond to it. Could you speak to it?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I can speak to that. Access to data is something we often hear about. In the last few years, Statistics Canada has gone to modernization efforts to improve access to our data via various methods. For instance, if you come to the Statistics Canada website,

all the information is free now. That wasn't the case a few years ago. We also have projects we are working on to increase virtual access to our data as well. We are engaged in a lot of efforts. We know it's not perfect, but—

• (1715)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Stephen Gordon, from McGill, would absolutely agree with that assessment. However, again, what I'm speaking about is the standards that are required for StatsCan to be able to have a university patch in. Right now, many of them have to drive or fly to Vancouver to pull out that information. It would greatly help in my region to have better access to understand those things.

With regard to the labour market, I certainly appreciate Mr. Johnson's intervention when he talked about the reason for the 10-year average. Because there have been a lot of changes in provincial policy in terms of minimum wage, as well as demographic shifts in particular areas, urbanization and whatnot, I imagine it can be very difficult to be able to point out the trends, other than if you look back from a bigger picture.

In some of the regions of Canada, in Kelowna, for example, the chamber of commerce has put together an economic scorecard where they're trying to evaluate how they can best deal with some of those challenges.

What are some of the things we can tell our constituents or some of these groups that want to get more information, that want to be able to utilize this data better? What are some of the suggestions you would have?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** In terms of British Columbia, there's a WorkBC provincial website that has really good labour market information. There is also the national Job Bank, which is both a job board for employers to post jobs and the centrepiece where we present the labour market information we produce. It is free and bilingual. That information is available.

We also put it in the government's open data store, which isn't always the most obvious place for users who aren't sophisticated to go in and find it, but certainly the standard information that we do have is available.

As my colleague was mentioning, there can be special tabulations or access to the raw data, which are a little more sophisticated. As you say, it is only in about 30 or 35 centres across the country, so it's somewhat more limited.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Mr. Dan Albas:** With regard to certain pools of labour, you might have retired baby boomers who suddenly come back to work on a temporary basis; and obviously when you have temporary foreign workers or new Canadians who are coming into the job market, it must be difficult to track and to be able to give proper overviews.

Is this something that you guys wrestle with on a regular basis, how to provide that just-in-time information?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** In terms of the just-in-time and the granular data, that's why actually using the Job Bank, which I'm responsible for as well, is about the closest we get to a real-time source of both employers, and to a more limited extent, some job seekers who actually create accounts. We can find those to be very detailed sources of insight. There is not sufficient volume and coverage to give us great confidence at every corner of the country, but there are places where we can pick up those signals.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I need to stop you there.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes.

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

My questions are in two areas. Job security would be a component of the issue of attracting people to jobs, as would living wages and benefits. We hear a lot from employers who can't attract people to jobs.

Do you keep statistics on wage growth, workplace injuries, employers or benefits that are provided to the workers? Do you have any of those statistics that would shed some light with respect to the issue of attraction and retention of employees?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** At Statistics Canada, we have various sources of information, whether it's administration or survey information, that help us shed some light in terms of indicators for benefits, as an example, and in terms of income information or pension information.

You mentioned workplace injuries or illnesses. We do not collect information on that.

• (1720)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Whatever you have available, is it something you can pass on to our committee so that we get a sense of the lay of the land?

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** Yes. We could definitely provide you with some additional information.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** That would be great. If you can break it down by sector so that we know what area of work we're talking about, that would be really great.

**Ms. Josée Bégin:** I'll see what we can do in terms of sectors.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

On a separate question—I'm always curious about this—under the national occupational classification, NOC, various jobs are grouped into certain categories and are ranked accordingly as high-skill or low-skill.

Can you explain a little bit how that works? I'm perplexed. How do you decide that a medical assistant is high-skilled and a dental assistant is low-skilled?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I'm sorry, we're smiling because we collaborate on the national occupational classification. ESDC does a lot of the research and we work with StatsCan to publish it. I may, then, take this question on board.

The skill levels are about the typical education and training required. As to how we assess it, we actually go out and talk to unions and employers and we look at job postings to see what people

say they need when they hire. We use that information to determine for these jobs whether they typically—sometimes they do not—require a university degree or would typically require up to two years of a college or apprenticeship training; or would they more likely involve just short-term, on-the-job training?

Really, it's the evidence, the facts of what typical employers who employ those occupations require by way of education and training for entry-level positions.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I get it. You're looking at all those elements. In my own mind, however, I go to see my dentist, and the dentist's assistant does a superb job. It seems to me that they require pretty extensive training, yet would not be ranked as highly skilled as a medical assistant. Is that right?

Was your collection of this information ever meant to be used for immigration purposes?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I think it was meant to be used for the full range of all labour market information, for all purposes. I would say yes, or that it wasn't exclusively not designed for that.

What's important is that when we put this forward, we're not intending to assign any notion of the skill or the value of a job. I think often it's implied that if yours is on the high-skill list, that means we value it more. That's not what is intended. It's really around the training and education typically required to get in. We often hear some of these issues around here.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Related to this, I see that in the projections there are all sorts of jobs or positions required ranked high-skill.

The flip side of it, what I see on the ground from people whom I would deem to be fairly high-skilled—for example, a specialized chef for a particular restaurant with a particular cuisine—is that often employers complain to me bitterly because they can't find anybody with the specialized skill to work in their restaurant. They can't expand; they sometimes can barely sustain themselves, because their existing chef is retiring and they can't really train anybody, so they need to hire from somewhere.

Well, they cannot. Under our current system, it's very difficult for them. Chefs are deemed not to be high-skill. That's one aspect of it: how we deal with those kinds of situations in which there's a clear need in the labour market, but our current situation does not allow for it?

Second, related to that: with all these high-skill positions, I would also think that caregivers who come to this country, who take care of my children or my loved ones, are the most important people in my life—outside of my children, I would argue—but they are deemed to be low-skilled.

With that low-skill designation come ramifications for immigration purposes. Right now, our immigration pathway is not looking to bring in people with so-called low skills; yet they are some of the most important people in our society.

By the way, these high-skilled workers need these caregivers, especially in light of the fact that we don't have a national child care strategy. If we don't have one, even if these workers come they can't work, because they have nobody to take care of their children.

Can you shed some light for us to get a better grasp of how immigration policy needs to be adjusted to reflect the actual needs in the community in a better way? Is there anything from your departments that can provide us with evidence and statistics we can utilize?

• (1725)

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** As an example, I believe a chef is what we would call a skill level B, for those A, B, C or D, meaning that it's a technical job. Skilled trades usually call for a college diploma, training or apprenticeship. If you ask me, from a NOC perspective, I would not necessarily say that is a low-skill trade. I would say that's a profession for which you typically require up to two years of formal technical training.

Likewise, again on the caregiver, when we say skill, the definition of skill is where we get caught up here, I think. The definition of skill is the typical education or training required.

Maybe there's something here about how that's communicated and explained, in terms of what we mean by skills, because right now it's focused around education and training.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I wonder whether or not then—

**The Chair:** I need you to end there.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Sorry. I'm just wondering about assessment tools then, if there could be consideration on a different assessment tool that would actually shed better light on this for the purposes of immigration, because I think that's what is required.

I will leave it at that, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I think we're going to be coming back to some of that question.

Go ahead, Mr. Sarai.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** I'm going to take over from where Ms. Kwan left off. I have similar constituents who have similar concerns. I will get to my other questions after.

Regarding a cook or a chef, in a conventional sense, you might think of somebody taking a two-year diploma and coming over here to study. A conventional cook or chef in an Indian or a Chinese-Canadian restaurant probably started cooking at eight years old, learned from their parents or worked with their parents, and is probably one of the best cooks ever.

I have asked the restaurants in my riding in Surrey about this. They have hired cooks and chefs with two-year diplomas from those countries, but they don't work with them. In India or China, if you're a cook with a two-year diploma, you have people working for you. You don't touch the food yourself. You say do that, do that, do that. They don't work in a small, 15- or 20-seat restaurant.

I think there needs to be an adjustment of categories; we can't put both together. That's more of a statement. It's causing a lot of issues where the growth of those restaurants is being hindered.

If you go in my riding on a Friday or Saturday night, you can't get a seat in any of these ethnic restaurants. They are packed. They will have 50 to 80 people outside the doors on a Friday or Saturday night, so I think we need to look at that.

The second issue I have is that you issue an LMIA to a company that shows there's a labour shortage. In my example, I will give you a carpenter who has a door factory in my riding. He sources and then finds a carpenter to come. This may be Immigration, but it means you are communicating with Immigration. They will say the company that he works for has no website. We don't see any website of this carpentry company in India. We didn't see any pictures.

Typically in India, if you're a carpenter, you don't have a web page and you don't have a Facebook page. You're the local carpenter. You make doors. You may do beautiful hand carvings and you may be the best.

How do they prove that? What I'm seeing is that those individuals are getting rejected, but they are the exact type of worker they actually need. They have gone and, in some cases, visited those shops or those places and said that's the exact guy they want.

I think you need to coordinate with StatsCan and Immigration to figure out where there's a shortage and exactly what type, tailored to the jobs that are in demand in those regions. Obviously, I can speak for my region of Surrey.

Do you communicate with Immigration, in that respect?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I have colleagues that communicate with Immigration and colleagues whom I understand the committee may consider whether they need to invite or reinvoke to talk to some of those concerns.

Through the Job Bank, if employers don't see skills or job titles they like, they can provide us with feedback. Interestingly, we received over 120,000 suggestions and the two areas that stood out were IT requirements, like certain softwares, and specialty cooks.

We are seeing that. We are hearing back from employers who use it that they want to be much more precise, in terms of the nature of the chefs that they are looking for.

I certainly have heard some of that feedback myself from employers.

•(1730)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I will follow up with this. The requirements to bring them in as temporary foreign workers—the English language and others—are sometimes lower than when we want them to be permanent residents. Again, that's where communication between the departments is needed. Hypothetically, somebody comes in as a carpenter, works here, does the two years.... Or a farm labourer does two years, maybe extends it to three or four years, and now wants to be a permanent resident. Our answer is that their English isn't up to speed, whereas they were good enough to work here for four years. They had all the skills. I look back to my own mother. My mother has a grade 8 education. She worked in a hospital as a cook. She went from assistant cook to cook. She now translates for people. She learned the language skills on the job. She probably still couldn't pass an IELTS to do the same job.

I think we need to revisit that in a more practical manner. If people are able to do the job here, then they should be able to get permanent residency based on the same level of IELTS and requirements that they need to come here. I ask if you could communicate with the counterparts. Obviously we do our ministerial or government parts, but I think the departments need to do that, so that we are comparing apples and apples and not apples and oranges.

Do I have more time?

**The Chair:** I would give you another couple of minutes if you wanted it, because you're pretty good today.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** This question is maybe for StatsCan. If we don't bring more immigrant workers to Canada in the next 10 years, what could happen to our labour force? Have you looked ahead? How does that affect our retired people in Canada, our industries and our labour force?

**Mr. Vincent Dale:** We have projected the labour force using a range of scenarios. Under every scenario we look at, the labour force, which is the proportion of the population that's working or looking for work, is going to decrease. It's true that's driven by fertility decreases and the aging of the baby boomers. At all levels of immigration we looked at, the labour force decreases.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** In layman's terms, we have a labour problem and we need immigrants.

**Mr. Vincent Dale:** I just want to emphasize and go back to that question that was asked before. We do not project labour demand. We're projecting the supply, looking 10 or 20 years out. We're not projecting the demand. We're just making an observation that the number of people working or looking for work is going to decrease as a proportion of the population.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Do you predict demand in your office, Mr. Johnson, or does anyone up there?

How nimble can you be to accommodate those? LMIA's in my riding are taking up to nine or 10 months now. Say it's a trucking or logistics company, and growth is huge due to a lot of free trade agreements going on around the world. They get 10 LMIA's to get 10 new drivers. The 10 come. They win another contract, and they want more. They have to wait nine months to get another 10 drivers.

We heard this in testimony yesterday. How can we make it so that those who are already approved, when they get more demand, can immediately add more workers?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** In terms of the processing of the LMIA's and the applications, I'll pass that on to my colleagues. I'm really not in a position of expertise to speak to that.

Gilles, did you want to speak to the forecasting of labour demand?

**Mr. Gilles Bérubé (Director, Labour Market and Skills Research Division, Department of Employment and Social Development):** We do have projections of labour demand. Before updating the projections of labour demand, we have projections of economic growth for Canada. Those projections are developed with The Conference Board of Canada. Incidentally, the Conference Board has published a study recently that relates to your question about the economic impacts if immigration were to stop in Canada. I think it was released recently.

The projections that the Conference—

•(1735)

**The Chair:** We could request that it to be brought into evidence as well.

Thank you for mentioning it.

**Mr. Gilles Bérubé:** The economic projection that is developed by The Conference Board of Canada has two main components: domestic production and foreign production, or domestic demand and foreign demand. Foreign demand will depend on expected growth in foreign countries, exchange rates and things like that. With respect to domestic demand in Canada, that will depend to an extent also on the labour force projections that enter into the economic forecast.

Labour force growth in Canada will drive consumer expenditure in Canada, which is the largest component of total demand. From that economic projection, or projection for demand for goods and services, the Conference Board derives a projection of demand by industrial sector. From there, we derive projections by occupation. The long-term trends that we are looking at in our projections are mostly related to what is happening at the occupational level in terms of job supply, or job seekers and job openings by occupation.

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

Mr. Whalen, if you have a question you want them to give us data on, we could ask for them to submit it, if there is something specific.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Actually, I think Mr. Bérubé answered the question.

I just want him to confirm that “Canada 2040: No Immigration Versus More Immigration” is the name of the study.

**Mr. Gilles Bérubé:** That's it exactly. Yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you. We'll have that in evidence.

Thank you very much. I see no other work.

The meeting is adjourned.







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