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Chair

Mr. Robert Oliphant

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)): I am going to call this meeting to order. We have quorum.

This is the 153rd meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in this Parliament. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study of settlement services across Canada.

We welcome our witnesses who have come to join us today. We're just partway through this study, gathering information about what we could do to improve settlement services for newcomers to Canada.

[Translation]

I think we will begin with the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

Are you Mr. Johnson or Mr. Dupuis?

Mr. Alain Dupuis (Director General, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Mr. Johnson is appearing via video conference.

The Chair: Yes.

You have seven minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Johnson, you have the floor.

Mr. Jean Johnson (President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair, honourable senators.

First, I want to thank you for having invited the FCFA to testify before you today.

The federation has existed since 1975. It is the national voice for French-language minority communities in nine provinces and three territories. In total, this means 2.7 million people who have chosen French, whether it was their first language or not.

Francophone and Acadian communities are present in all regions of the country and are increasingly diversified. For instance, 29% of the francophone population of British Columbia and 26% of the Alberta francophone population is attributable to immigration. In the Toronto region, more than 50% of young francophones of less than 18 belong to visible minorities.

Immigration is closely linked to the future of francophone and Acadian communities. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act,

in fact, includes in its objectives the development of official language minority communities.

In addition, the federal government has specific targets for francophone immigration. Among others, in 2018, 4% of economic immigrant men and women had to be francophones who would settle in our communities. That target was not reached. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada advised the FCFA last week that the percentage of francophone immigrants recruited for 2018 barely reached 1.8%. Unfortunately, this shortfall reoccurs every year. And yet, for two decades, our communities have been developing recruitment, settlement, inclusion and the retention of francophone immigrants. However, the tools the government uses to support us in that effort are not adequate.

This is where the link with the study your committee is currently doing resides. The FCFA is not appearing today as a settlement service. We are here to talk about the importance of French-language settlement services for our communities and for the newcomers who choose to settle in them.

Providing settlement services in francophone minority environments is not always the same as providing them to majority anglophone environments. The approach is completely different. Francophone settlement services aim to direct the immigrant toward French-language resources in the community. Their purpose is to ensure we retain the immigrant through the creation of links with the francophone community. This approach reflects the reality of the francophone community and the way it is organized, from the school to the francophone health centres and employment services.

The English-language or bilingual organizations cannot provide settlement services that are closely aligned with the reality of the francophone community. Very often, they do not even direct francophone immigrants toward francophone resources.

That is what happened for a very long time at Pearson Airport. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, in fact, resolved that particular issue by designating the Centre francophone de Toronto as the organization tasked with providing orientation services to francophone immigrants who arrive through Pearson Airport.

That is the type of specific measure we need to develop and strengthen settlement services created by and for francophone communities for the benefit of francophone immigrants.

Because our communities are fully aware of the fact that when they welcome a newcomer, they are welcoming an individual or a family who have chosen to uproot themselves in this major way, the well-being of the newcomers who choose our communities is always central to our concerns.

We recommend that your committee include the following measures in its report to the government.

- (1535)

First, there have to be calls for tender that are designed for francophone settlement services. In this way, our service providers will not have to compete with service providers to the majority, who often have more resources, but often know almost nothing about the minority realities.

Next, as I've just explained, often the francophone organizations that can provide French-language settlement services are small and have few resources. Consequently we recommend that the government prioritize strengthening the capacity of those organizations.

Third, IRCC has identified six types of settlement services provided to immigrants. In the minority francophone environment, we would need a seventh, that is to say a service that would help immigrants create sustainable links with the host community, which would allow them to develop feelings of belonging to that community, live in it in French, and in this way contribute to the growth and vitality of the francophonie.

Fourth, temporary workers and foreign students must also be allowed to benefit from settlement services.

Fifth, with respect to settlement services, I recommend that your committee underscore in its report the importance of a French perspective that takes into account the realities of the linguistic minority.

And finally, although this is not part of your committee's study, I'd like to mention that the government has undertaken to modernize the Official Languages Act. Last month, the FCFA submitted a complete draft bill in this regard. That proposal includes a government obligation to adopt immigration policies that support linguistic duality, which they do not at this time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Johnson.

[*English*]

We're going to continue now with Ms. Crane, from Huron County Immigration Partnership.

Ms. Kristin Crane (Immigration Liaison, Huron County Immigration Partnership): Good afternoon. My name is Kristin Crane. I am with the Huron County Immigration Partnership. We are located on the shores of Lake Huron, northwest of London and west of Kitchener-Waterloo.

Huron County has a population of just under 60,000 that's spread out over 3,400 square kilometres, and our largest population hub is about 8,000 people.

We are a region in Ontario that has the lowest unemployment rate. We're sitting at about 3%, and the entire area is experiencing a severe workforce shortage.

Huron County received funding from IRCC in 2010, and this was to establish a local immigration partnership. More recently, in October 2017, our county received IRCC-funded itinerant settlement services, and these are delivered to us by the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario.

Our local immigration partnership is part of settlement services; however, it offers indirect services, and that is because the work is done with the service providers rather than with the newcomers themselves. The mandate of an immigration partnership is to create welcoming communities, raise awareness of newcomer needs and bring about better collaboration and coordination of service providers. We're kind of the behind-the-scenes movers.

In Huron County, we've seen an increase in the number of newcomers mainly because of private sponsorship of refugees. Our county is a destination for secondary migration as those sponsored families are contacting friends and family members who are in urban areas. Therefore, many of our newcomers have low literacy rates, very low English levels and a high level of needs. However, we have very few formal services to offer them.

This is where the volunteer sector fits in. This increase in population is much needed. However the volunteer sector isn't quite equipped to serve all the needs of these refugee families.

The benefit of volunteers is that they do offer a very personalized service and a high level of support. However, they are untrained and they don't usually engage in training because all of their free time is spent helping the families.

We see that the volunteer sector is filling the gaps, but they cannot be replacing the settlement services that we need in our area.

That brings me to talk about some of the gaps that we're experiencing in settlement services in our rural areas. I want to add that it goes beyond Huron County. It's our entire region. I've gotten feedback from a lot of other counties in the area.

The first area is around language. We have a lack of interpretation services, and people must travel an hour and a half to provide those interpretation services in our area, which becomes very expensive to pay for that travel time as well as the cost of the service.

Our English classes are infrequent. They happen on a weekly basis only, and they aren't federally funded, which means that they do not come with funding for child care. They are still very high quality. Again, it's the volunteers who are providing child care so that the parents can attend these classes.

A really large gap that I want to focus on is the youth in our area. The kids are being left very unsupported. None of our schools have SWIS workers—settlement workers in schools—and most of the schools don't even offer the ESL classes. We find that the 10- to 16-year-olds are becoming a very vulnerable population. There are problems with language acquisition, which spills over into some academic barriers. There are social integration issues. They carry heavy responsibility in the family, providing child care for those younger siblings as well as providing interpretation and translation services to their parents, in addition to sometimes having part-time jobs or a lot of work in the home.

What is really significant is that there are not enough peers of a similar ethnocultural group, so this is leading to pretty significant feelings of isolation in our communities.

I want to make a series of recommendations of what I think I could see settlement services looking like in rural areas.

First would be having SWIS workers wherever settlement service workers operate. If the parents are receiving services, the youth should be as well.

Next would be training for the volunteer sector—perhaps mandatory training for those sponsorship groups prior to receiving the families, while they still have time to commit to that kind of training. Another recommendation would be to have more funding for support by the settlement service providers and agencies to train the volunteers on how best to support the newcomers and when to refer them to the formal settlement services. I think this would ensure that appropriate boundaries are set, and it would avoid the volunteer fatigue that many are experiencing right now. It would allow the volunteers to do what they do best, but allow the professionals to step in when that is needed.

I feel that the volunteer sector is what makes rural communities strong. Increasing their capacity makes our communities strong, but I think it will also save the government money.

• (1540)

Thirdly, I would advocate for virtual settlement services. If there are SWIS workers or ESL teachers who cannot come to the students on a regular basis, could they connect virtually or could students join classes elsewhere? There's a big opportunity to better utilize technology. The technology exists in the schools and employment centres. Almost all newcomers have a smart phone and can access the Internet, at least through the libraries in all the rural communities. This doesn't replace the human touch, which is still needed, but it can be a definite add-on to services.

As well, I recommend ensuring that the community connection program is funded in all rural areas as part of settlement services. This program encourages the social, cultural and professional interactions and connections between newcomers and the community. It assists immigrants and refugees to feel connected and engaged in the community, to feel as though it's home. Isolation is a huge factor in rural communities; it is very prevalent. We need to do more programming that brings newcomers together and newcomers to interact with other community members.

Another recommendation is to ensure that settlement services programming includes funding for transportation in rural areas so that newcomers can access the services they desperately need.

Lastly, I recommend that urban service partners that offer interpretation should receive funding to provide those services in rural areas, to cover the travel cost so that interpretation isn't cost-prohibitive, because we know that language is the fundamental barrier to overcome.

I want to focus on a few of the best practices that we've seen in our region.

It is actually the itinerant settlement service model. That's where the settlement services come to the newcomers and the transportation barrier is overcome. It doesn't rely upon maintaining physical buildings, and it's very efficient with its resources. As well, it's very flexible. It's based upon the needs. The appointments are set up as needed, and the location is left up to the newcomers, where it's convenient for them, which usually is in the library in the small communities where people live.

My last best practice would be to involve non-traditional partners in the settlement process—in this case, employers. Our Huron County Immigration Partnership has worked very hard to engage employers as partners and we've had a large success rate of newcomer employment in our area. Employers should be encouraged to adapt their practices to include more involvement in settling their newcomer employees. The growth and the survival of their businesses depend upon the newcomer workforce in many of our rural regions, so the employer should be doing what it can to support that.

As our reputation increases in rural areas as being a great destination for newcomers, we need to take measures that ensure that newcomers have positive experiences and that settlement services can meet their needs. Certainly the approach for settlement services in rural areas is very different from what it looks like in urban centres.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we'll go to Mr. Mymko, from the Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corporation.

Mr. Dustin Mymko (Community Development Officer/Settlement, Cartwright Killarney Boissevain Settlement Services, Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corporation): Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Dustin Mymko, and I serve as the Community Development Officer for the Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corporation.

Since the federal government took over the settlement services program in Manitoba—in 2013, I believe—we've held the contribution agreements with CIC and IRCC to administer the Cartwright Killarney Boissevain Settlement Services for the communities of Cartwright, Killarney and Boissevain and the surrounding areas.

I act as the community development officer and oversee and deliver settlement services as a part-time, single-person office.

Settlement services are of the utmost importance in our rural communities, and this is especially so in Cartwright and the surrounding Cartwright-Roblin municipality. Our municipality has approximately 1,300 residents, with about 350 of those residing in what was formerly known as the Village of Cartwright.

As with most rural Canadian communities, Cartwright has experienced its share of challenges over the years, but an incredibly strong community spirit, coupled with an intense desire to maintain the viability of our rural life, has led Cartwright to keep its population steady.

The majority of individuals in our community are tied into either agriculture or manufacturing, but our real pride and joy rests with the school. Cartwright has fought over the years to keep our school going, and we are now in our 27th year of funding Cartwright Community Independent School, which allows our students to graduate at home.

The community continually prioritizes the school, and we know that if it were to shut down, it would be the first step towards the decline of our community. The population and tax base would drop, the services would begin to be cut and life as we know it would become that much more difficult to maintain.

As of September 2018, the start of our current school year, our K-to-12 school had 97 students, up from the low 60s a couple of years ago. Forty-eight of those students, or 50% of them, have parents who were not born in Canada.

I fully believe that immigration has been the single biggest factor in the success of our community, and that the provision of settlement services to those newcomers has been extremely beneficial.

Our organization is contracted to provide only the most basic of settlement services: Information and orientation sessions and needs and assessment referrals. Newcomers arrive and we help them get their feet on the ground. We show them how to obtain social insurance numbers, we help them obtain a post office box and set up a bank account, and we introduce them to potential employers and community groups. We assist them in their applications to Manitoba Health and the Canada child benefit program. We get the children enrolled in school and make sure they know about the local English classes.

Once they have all of that out of the way, we're here to assist in overcoming any of the other obstacles they face as they adapt to life in rural Manitoba.

We began our contracts with about 16 hours per week of funding to cover the three communities, which are separated by about 70 kilometres in total. Over the years those hours have been cut back to the 11.25 we have been able to negotiate for this fiscal year. The continual reduction in service hours and overall funding is very challenging and very concerning. We've learned first-hand, many times over, that once services leave our rural communities, they very rarely return.

Recent direction from IRCC ahead of the call for proposals for 2019 is that single-person offices such as ours are no longer a part of

the model. We've been urged to pursue partnerships with larger organizations. This initially caused a lot of consternation throughout the sector, especially in our rural communities. There are about seven of us operating as single-person offices in Manitoba, and we felt initial reactions of impending job losses and sudden itinerant service delivery.

Upon further consideration, however, this appears to be an excellent model going forward. The Roblin-Cartwright CDC board weighed our options and we are currently in discussion with Westman Immigrant Services in Brandon to try to carve a new path forward.

This will allow us to reduce our administrative burden, build capacity in our settlement services organization and raise our overall level of service. There are hopes of expanding our services to include the settlement workers in schools program, to bring language training and settlement under one banner, and to add new programming such as conversation circles and mentoring partnerships.

While in a general sense these partnerships are a step in the right direction, there are still some areas that could drastically use improvement, from my experience. The definition of an eligible client, being a person with permanent residency, seems woefully inadequate on both ends of the spectrum.

Our community has seen an increase in temporary foreign workers, both through need from local agricultural producers and manufacturers using the program and through choice. We have immigration consultants who are assisting people in obtaining case type 58 work permits as their pathway into Canada. They're here, they intend to stay permanently, but they don't have the status. On the other hand, once a permanent resident becomes a Canadian citizen, they no longer qualify for the services. They have passed the test, acquired their citizenship and now they're on their own.

- (1550)

Expanding the definition of eligible clients to include temporary foreign workers, who need help as much as and sometimes more than permanent residents, and moving the end point past the arbitrary cut-off of citizenship would go a long way to helping our newcomers, especially in rural communities where other secondary supports like cultural communities are rare.

Another issue facing rural settlement service provision is training and assistance. The single-person offices have very few places to turn when needing to find answers to newcomers issues. Every newcomer comes in the door with a different problem, and sometimes they are wildly specific. As one individual with no manual on hand, the only place to turn has been the IRCC hotline, and it has long been functionally obsolete. Attempting to call that number to help obtain answers for a client's ultra-specific immigration issue has long led to nothing but frustration and defeat.

For years now, rural Manitoba settlement service providers have had to lean on one another for assistance, advice and support. It works in a pinch, but it really shouldn't have to. Establishing a service-provider-only hotline, where settlement service providers could be advised on how to interpret a certain government form or immigration process, would raise the level of service nationwide.

We are lucky in Cartwright that our member of Parliament has very knowledgeable and very helpful staff who are happy to assist and really are invaluable to the services we provide, but, from speaking to my colleagues, I know that not everybody is in that same position.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I realize that the cost per client in rural settings is going to be higher than in urban centres, but I would offer that the amount is well spent. Retaining newcomers in rural communities truly is the way to ensure the longevity of these communities. Providing these folks with the supports they need, which they can't get elsewhere, is a big step towards that goal.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Also, thank you to all the witnesses for being so disciplined with respect to your time. I hope our members are as well.

We're going to be for seven minutes with Mr. Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you for being here today and for advocating for your regions and for economic development through immigration.

As you know, our government has unveiled the pilot program for northern and rural communities. It's a program based on an Atlantic pilot program. I know that communities can apply. I think the application date was early March. Do you think this will benefit rural communities? I know there were certain criteria for you to be selected. Have your regions applied for this and how will it benefit them?

I can start with Ms. Crane, maybe.

• (1555)

Ms. Kristin Crane: I was very excited to see this pilot project launched. It's something I had been hoping for.

Unfortunately, for our region, because of our population size, we were over the 50,000 mark. Then, when it came to the isolation factor, we were not quite isolated enough. At that point, even though we had met the criteria, we had our strategies in place. It was a matter of whether we could move this off to a smaller organization. In our area, none of those smaller organizations felt they had the capacity to submit an application for it, despite the encouragement and support I was willing to offer.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to apply for that. However, I see it as a huge step moving forward, and I think there are probably a few things—some details of the criteria—to be worked out for the future.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I think one of the criteria for approval, and correct me if I am wrong, is that the population be under 50,000 —

Ms. Kristin Crane: Correct.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: —and yours was 60,000.

Ms. Kristin Crane: Yes, we're about 58,000 or 59,000.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: You would probably recommend that there be a buffer or something like that in the population criterion.

Ms. Kristin Crane: Yes. I spoke with a lot of different colleagues in surrounding regions and areas, and they were not able to submit applications either because of those finer points of the criteria. However, from attending our conference and speaking to some colleagues in northern Ontario, I did find out that they were able to apply for it.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Mymko, can you mention that as well?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: We very excitedly applied for this program. We've been trying to attract newcomers to our community in any way we can for the last decade or so, but the only thing in our power has been building off our newcomer base. Through our community development corporation, we've really worked with the newcomers we have to assist any friends and family to come over.

When we saw this program and saw that we fit all the criteria, we were very happy to apply. We think this will give us the power to help attract more specific newcomers to help fill needs in our community. We think this looks to be a great program so far.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Perhaps I can ask our guest on video conference to comment on the same line of questioning.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Johnson: I will answer briefly. Perhaps Mr. Dupuis would like to add something afterwards.

There are two challenging factors. For the [technical difficulties] communities, it's a big challenge for our communities. There is an additional challenge...

The Chair: Could you wait a minute please? We are having a problem with the interpretation.

Very well, you may continue.

Mr. Jean Johnson: I was saying that the francophone communities face two challenges. First, in the rural regions, the situation is even more difficult. Our two colleagues have just spoken about the rural issue. In addition, there are even fewer people and that's also a problem.

Mr. Dupuis, did you want to add something?

Mr. Alain Dupuis: I'd simply like to add that the francophone communities really liked the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program. And so, the communities are favourable to the idea of implementing a program of that type, both in the North and the west.

However, we must reflect on distinct approaches for francophone communities. Their needs are different, as Mr. Johnson said. The communities are much more dispersed. There are a lot of parallels with the rural services. Service providers are often in fact one single person who must serve immense territories. We hope that the new programs will take these particular characteristics into account.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Crane, you mentioned that you have 3% unemployment, which is fantastic, but I know that many jobs are still to be filled. You mentioned virtual settlements and that you can use certain technologies to help with resettlement. Can you explain that and elaborate on it a little more?

• (1600)

Ms. Kristin Crane: I know that our population is sparse and that our number of newcomers sometimes isn't high enough in one concentrated area to really make the justification to have the level of services we need. If we could connect people via technology, we could increase English classes, for instance, from one a week to several per week, joining students together with a teacher. In the case of a settlement worker in schools, if the settlement worker cannot come to all of the different locations just to meet with two, three, or four students in the school, then, upon initially meeting them and setting up that relationship, maybe they could just connect via technology to provide those services to the students.

Having nothing is just leaving huge gaps in our communities. However, I think technology could fill some of those gaps.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I'll pass on my time to Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Thank you.

Mr. Johnson, my constituency of Surrey—Newton is home to the French school of Gabrielle-Roy. I have a francophone community in my riding. I have a very constant and close connection with the place and the community, but they haven't raised these issues. I can see that millions of dollars are flowing into the constituency, going to organizations like DIVERSEcity, Options Community Service Society, BIC-Canada, and S.U.C.E.S.S. Are there any particular programs you can suggest that either these organizations or I should take back to the francophone community in Surrey so that we are able to plan and the community is effectively served, particularly when it comes to newcomers?

Mr. Jean Johnson: I can talk about one that will help the integration of our new immigrants.

[Translation]

Language training is essential for newcomers. Often, the contract is given to anglophone organizations, which fact contributes to distancing those persons from our communities.

We believe there are two advantages to choosing francophone organizations. In Alberta, for instance, Campus Saint-Jean or even the Centre collégial de l'Alberta would be ideal places for newcomers to develop language skills with respect to the language of work, which is English in that province. There are two advantages to that. On the one hand, this brings the citizens of the francophone community of Alberta closer together, permanently. On the other hand, it strengthens the capacity of organizations whose mandate is the promotion and teaching of the French language.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

We go to Mr. Maguire. We'll have eight minutes on this side to make up for that.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): I want to thank the witnesses for being here today and for their excellent presentations, along the lines of what we've looked at with settlement services in the meetings we've had before, but I think there's lots of new information here today.

Dustin, I will take back to my staff the compliments you've provided them, as I know you're from my constituency. Thank you very much. They do work hard at it.

I know you cover a lot more than the 1,300 persons who are in the RM of Cartwright Boissevain Killarney. You are probably covering seven or eight thousand people in that larger area and a lot of small businesses in that region. I don't know how you do it, but you carry dual hats, with the community development side of it, as well as the training required to keep them in the community. I know you've worked with a lot of small businesses there to help establish it.

I heard earlier from Kristin on how those small businesses could be involved. Could you expand a bit—Dustin first, and then Kristin—on how you think they've played a role in your training programs? Is there anything else they could do to enhance that?

• (1605)

Mr. Dustin Mymko: We've worked locally with some of the employers to identify positions of need and to try to fill them with the newcomers we have. From a community development standpoint, we've worked with the newcomers and businesses to attract more newcomers to fill those needs.

We've heard of programs run in other parts of the province where English is taught at work. As we pursue these new partnerships with the larger organizations, that's something we want to explore. There's a possible cost-sharing between the employers and government, where the newcomers are taught more workplace-specific language tailored, first and foremost, to the employer. They learn terms they need on the job, and can succeed at work before they move on to English as a whole.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Does that fit in your area, Kristin, as well?

Ms. Kristin Crane: It does. One thing I did not mention is that I also work for Huron County Economic Development, so a portion of my time is spent with economic development issues.

The immigration partnership looks at everything but the attraction piece for newcomers to the region, whereas economic development—that hat—is more about attracting people to the region. We've worked with employers on all aspects of how to attract them to our community, retain and keep them, and how to get involved in that settlement area.

We've been running a very successful working group with the immigration partnership—we call it an employer round table—that brings them together to talk about HR issues. This invariably looks at how to hire a new workforce—meaning the newcomer population—and encourages them to change their policies and practices to be more inclusive of newcomers, whether it's changing their application forms or the interview process.

We're trying to fill the void of that community connections piece, creating more wraparound supports in the workplace. This includes family members in social outings and programming and being cognizant of some of those language barriers and what they can do to work around them. We do have newcomers with very low levels of English, but many employers have managed to successfully hire them in the workplace—and safely.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Great, thanks. Just because of the time, I'll go on here.

I believe both of you mentioned—or just Ms. Crane, but I'd like Dustin to elaborate on this as well—your connection to Westman Immigrant Services in Brandon. Is that about an hour and a half from Cartwright? You mentioned the travel cost and how that could be helped. Could you expand on the needs there?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: We're pursuing the partnership with Brandon right now. It looks very promising and is going to expand our base of service. We haven't really delved into the costs associated with bringing in those services. We're hoping to try to offset a lot of the costs with local volunteer training. For a lot of the programs they run out of Westman Immigrant Services, I know they have a large staff, but they also have a really large volunteer base. We're hoping that one thing to be gained from the partnership is learning how to attract those volunteers and how to train them up properly so they can provide the services at a lower cost. We know that the funding is always quite limited.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Is virtual teaching an option? You mentioned that as well.

Mr. Dustin Mymko: I think it is with certain sectors of the newcomers. Language literacy is a big enough issue, and technological literacy is going to be another. With newcomers who are able to use the technology, I think it's an area that we're really going to explore to really try to add more services.

Mr. Larry Maguire: With your whole idea of a hotline, it looks like you're working within your own internal group. How else can we expand that? I take it that you feel that the IRCC one was—I think your word was—“obsolete”, so how could that be resurrected?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: It was “functionally obsolete”. The IRCC hotline was a place I would turn to after I had exhausted the IRCC website and couldn't find answers to a specific question. When I do get through to somebody—which I haven't tried in some time, because it seems like a waste of time—I get somebody who's reading the website to me, which I've already read. What I would like is somebody who can interpret it for me, because the website covers generic rules that apply to all newcomers or all immigrants, but I've got a specific scenario that I want to know how I would apply those rules to it. I need to know because if we help them fill out the forms and send things in, it's going to be eight weeks before we find out if we've filled out the wrong form, and then we're back to square one and a lot of time has been wasted.

●(1610)

Mr. Larry Maguire: In regard to inadequate services, I know, Mr. Johnson, it sounds like you've got needs for resources there as well. I know I'm getting short of time, so—

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

Mr. Larry Maguire: Gosh, we're not that short. Thank you.

Is there anything, then, that each of you would like to put forward?

I know you mentioned, Mr. Johnson, the 1.8%. What would the normal target be that you're looking at for the French community in that area?

Then on the general use of resources, could I get a closing comment from each of you on your greatest priority.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Johnson: The objective for 2018 had been set at 4%, but we only reached 1.8%. No real plan was put in place to attain that objective.

Our priority is to establish concrete strategies with IRCC that are designed by and for the communities, to allow them to be proactive in recruiting our future citizens.

Mr. Dupuis, did you want to add something?

Mr. Alain Dupuis: At this time, the integration journey in minority francophone environments is fragmented. A francophone immigrant who arrives in Alberta can benefit from a first orientation service in the French language. However, afterwards he may not have access to the entire continuum of French-language services, to help him look for a job, for instance, establish links with the community, or integrate his children in a school. He may not benefit from all of these services in French, either because they don't exist, or because he has not been directed to the proper places to continue his integration journey in French.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Dupuis.

I'm sorry.

[English]

It's a little bit after eight minutes.

Ms. Quach.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to share my speaking time with my colleague who has just arrived.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

My first questions will be for Mr. Johnson and Mr. Dupuis.

You spoke a lot about access to French-language services, especially in airports. How important is it to also have access to legal services in French? Although Quebec is a francophone province, after the arrival of 25,000 irregular migrants in 2017, there weren't enough French-language legal services and health care. There was a particular lack of francization and interpretation services. Even in Quebec we need such services.

What is the situation in your area?

Mr. Jean Johnson: It's an immense challenge. I will let Mr. Dupuis provide further explanations.

Mr. Alain Dupuis: The francophone lawyers' associations wish to offer more specialized services to francophone immigrants. That is a perfect example of gaps in the immigrants' integration journey. That is one of the sectors that needs to be developed.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: People often come to see me, since Roxham Road, which we often hear about, is located about one kilometre from my riding. Several communities and organizations mobilized to provide volunteer assistance to the thousands of migrants who crossed the border. As you said, Ms. Crane, these services are often offered in large centres like Montreal.

Several people from the community, among them Mr. Michel Pilon, mobilized to ask for funding. In British Columbia, there was a \$3.4 million pilot project for migrant workers, but there is no equivalent in Quebec, where it would be necessary.

You spoke about migrant workers and cases of abuse. The regions lack services to help those workers find decent housing when they have work accidents. Foreign migrant workers often work in agriculture. That is the case in our province and we are working on setting up services for them.

What are your recommendations in that regard?

• (1615)

[English]

Ms. Kristin Crane: This is a huge issue in our region as well. We are an agricultural hub. The number of temporary foreign workers we have is unknown, but estimates are at about 500, at the very least, and they're unseen, other than on the occasional shopping trip in the area.

I would like to see the definition broadened of who can access funded settlement services for temporary foreign workers. For our employers here in particular, we've had to help advocate for them to be able to keep their temporary foreign workers, and we've kind of stepped in to direct them to resources and the appropriate channels for them to apply for permanent residency for these temporary foreign workers.

It's not just that they come, but they leave and don't come back. Some of these people have been coming for decades to do that work. If they were given the opportunity to permanently settle in the area with their families, they would like to.

You hear stories from time to time about things that can happen that are quite atrocious, but for the most part, I think things continue on quite well and there are quite diligent employers. I do think there needs to be better monitoring of what's happening in these areas and then access to support and legal information—it's difficult to

navigate and very expensive—so that employers can know the appropriate channels to go about applying for permanent residency. There also needs to be some sort of funding or federal support for that.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Thank you.

I now yield the floor to Ms. Jenny Kwan.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you to our witnesses.

Ms. Crane, I'd like to follow up on your response to that. I've heard from many migrant workers who have expressed interest in seeking permanent resident status here in Canada. In fact, there's a strong campaign that basically centres itself on the principle that if you're good enough to work, you're good enough to stay.

So I wonder whether or not you might comment on that. Is that something this committee should be recommending to government, to hold true to that principle with respect to migrant workers?

Ms. Kristin Crane: I believe so. I think the amount of process that needs to take place for an employer to bring in an employee from overseas and the dedication it takes for a temporary foreign worker to commit to an overseas position like that, leaving friends and family to come to a relatively isolated existence in Canada, demonstrates their commitment to their employer. Employers are impressed and want to keep these people.

If that is the choice of the temporary foreign worker, then why would we possibly deny them that? In our region, we are looking... This is the opportunity for employers to connect to the skills they need. They have recruited for it. What more do we need? It's filling the jobs we have available. I think these people have proven to be very dedicated, diligent people, and they would make great Canadian residents.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much.

I wonder whether or not the other witnesses might have something to add, or even if they would just concur with the suggestion. Could we just move down the row of witnesses on that?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: I don't have a lot of experience with the migrant workers. Most of the people coming on work permits to our area immediately hit the ground and they want to stay. They're here to stay. Either they've come on a two-year term to work or a one-year term to work in a hog barn or an immigration consultant has helped them find a faster way to get their feet on the ground in Canada while they work toward permanent residency. The majority of the people with permits are here as a pathway to permanent residency, and I think supporting them early on just increases their chances of success.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Dupuis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Dupuis: Outside Quebec, there is currently a demographic crisis in the francophonie. As Statistics Canada indicated, simply maintaining the demographic weight of francophones in minority environments would mean that francophone immigration would have to rise to 6%. Temporary workers and international students are already in our communities and organizations. Facilitating their access to settlement services and subsequently to citizenship would be a good thing for us. It would be a good way for the federal government to support Canada's linguistic duality.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Speaking on the issue of resettlement support, I think one of the issues our government needs to step up on is providing the language training in communities, both francophone and anglophone. Also for women in particular, I'd like to touch on the need for child care support.

Is the current system that we have today sufficient for what is happening, or do we need additional resources and support to ensure that people resettle successfully in our communities?

•(1620)

The Chair: I would say pick one person. There are about 30 seconds. I'm going to give you extra time, so you have about 30 seconds even with extra time.

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

I'll start with Ms. Crane.

Ms. Kristin Crane: Yes. In our region we don't have federally funded support, so it's provincial. It doesn't come with any child care support. Transportation and child care are the two things I hear about the most from service providers, namely, that these are detriments to people accessing the services. I don't think child care is sufficient. The women are the ones who are the most vulnerable. They're least likely to gain employment first and tend to be more isolated and have poorer settlement experiences.

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

Mr. Whalen, we're going back to seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Thank you.

We have a group called the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador that is connected to a small organization named Compas, which provides settlement services in St. John's and all over Newfoundland and Labrador. A few weeks ago, their representatives spoke to me about the issues mentioned earlier by Mr. Mymko and Ms. Crane. They explained that there are people who devote 10 or 15 hours a week to that issue, but spend the rest of their time on other matters.

I'd like to ask you whether an organization like yours could conceivably administer those services and create partnerships with service providers in small francophone communities throughout the country in order to provide better service.

Mr. Alain Dupuis: Fortunately, IRCC knows that francophone settlement services need to be beefed up. At this time, the support

and capacity strengthening for this network are not equivalent to that of the anglophone side. IRCC has already made that a funding priority, thanks to the Action Plan for Official Languages.

Together with other national organizations, we want to strengthen this type of support with the partners who provide settlement services on the ground. We have to determine how to consolidate the work and strengthen capacity. Yes, that can be done by facilitating administration, but I also like the ideas that were proposed, for instance providing professional support in some specific situations. We have to continue to strengthen capacity for our settlement workers.

Mr. Nick Whalen: On this same topic, the Compas organization representatives told me that the issue isn't necessarily the lack of communication among francophone community groups. It is, rather, the anglophone groups that do not know the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador well enough, and do not have sufficiently strong links with it when they deal with refugees or other persons who would really need French-language services. The challenge lies with explaining those services to the anglophone groups.

Do you think the federal government could do something to strengthen the links, not only among francophone groups, but also between the anglophone service providers and minority francophone groups, everywhere in the country?

Mr. Alain Dupuis: Absolutely. Quite simply, in the anglophone and bilingual contribution agreements, you could include the obligation to direct a francophone client to French-language services.

Too often, we hear about cases where a francophone immigrant arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland, did not know that there was a francophone community, and found out about it three or four years later, when he and his family had already completed the whole integration process. Those people have to be directed to French-language services as soon as they arrive.

[*English*]

Mr. Nick Whalen: Maybe if I can continue with Mr. Mymko and Ms. Crane as a bit of a focus group, are you guys aware of the types of francophone settlement services that might be available, either in Manitoba or rural Ontario? How do you work with those other organizations, if you're aware of them?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: I am aware of francophone organizations based out of Winnipeg. Off the top of my head, I'm not aware of any in rural areas. I haven't had occasion to have any sorts of interactions with them.

Ms. Kristin Crane: That's one thing that has worked quite well. We're based out of the London regional office. We do come together on a regular basis. We are connected with Collège Boréal that way. I do know a colleague who could provide French-language services.

What I have found really invaluable are the national conferences I've been able to participate in. There's a pathways to prosperity one. It brings the RIFs together—Réseaux en immigration francophone—and the LIPs. It's not entirely the same but it's very similar. I see those exchanges as really valuable because those are the groups tasked with pulling all of those partnerships together, creating those collaborative activities.

•(1625)

Mr. Nick Whalen: You would say that if we're going to fund these types of collaborative activities, it would work well to grow this network.

Ms. Kristin Crane: I believe so. I know that right now, through the local immigration partnership, there are approximately 80 across Canada. A proposal is going to be submitted to create a national group of local immigration partnerships to advocate for things on a more national level. That issue could well be addressed between immigration partnerships and the RIFs, and how they can cross-refer and better support the francophone communities, especially the rural ones. When we're just looking at such small numbers, it's important to be able to access....

We've also learned that it's not just francophones. Some people choose to access it in French. If you're Spanish-speaking, French may very well be much easier.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Mr. Mymko, you spoke a bit earlier about your possible reluctance to engage in an administrative partnership with the group in Brandon, Manitoba. You've been coming around to it as an organization. Has the conversation we've had today either reinforced your desire to come into partnership with Brandon or made you rethink it? What might be your thoughts on these types of administrative partnerships?

Mr. Dustin Mymko: The reluctance on our part was just in the immediate term. After giving it some thought, it really does seem to be the way to go. For me, with the funding level I've had, one term that we've really referred to is the "administrative burden". Dealing with the paperwork that's involved in a contribution agreement chewed up a lot of the time. That time could be better spent with clients.

With this partnership, we feel that we're not going to have to reinvent the wheel all the time. I've been trying to get a local conversation circle/group going in our community. I really don't know how to do that. We've been doing it by trial and error. I know Brandon has had success with those programs. They're going to train me up on how to get one going. Time's going to be spent more efficiently.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Congratulations. It sounds very much like if half of the children in the local school are either first- or second-generation newcomers and that it's really your efforts and the efforts of your group that have allowed that to happen.

I think that's my time.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Ms. Rempel for about three to three and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you.

My maiden name is Godin and my family is francophone, but I was anglicized.

[*English*]

As a franco-Manitoban who has moved to Alberta and finds it exceptionally difficult to ever practise my French, certainly when I

go back home to Manitoba my French grandfather looks at me like I'm the black sheep of the family.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): You probably are.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: True.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Johnson, could you perhaps spend the remainder of the time talking specifically about any recommendations you might have for the government on how we can better provide French-language training programs for francophones in Alberta specifically.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Johnson: That is a big issue.

There are two aspects to it.

First, there is the citizen who is trying to learn French and keep in touch with his or her language. In your case, this was your family's language.

Moreover, francophone organizations need to be strengthened by the proper orientation of students or clients who want to learn French. I would go a bit further. In Alberta, the language of work is English. The immigrant citizen needs English to survive in Alberta, correct? Who is in the best position to provide English-language instruction to prepare the immigrant citizen whose first official spoken language is French? We submit that it would be francophone organizations, for two reasons: this builds the capacity of the organization. Secondly, it also cultivates a feeling of loyalty and belonging in the immigrant to the host community that supports him with all of his learning needs so that he can integrate the workforce. That is one way of doing better integration work with that citizen in our communities.

Did I answer your question, Ms. Rempel?

•(1630)

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: I wish we had another 10 minutes for you to answer, but I think we're done.

The Chair: You have about minute if you want it.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Sure. I'll give the rest of the time to Ms. Crane.

When I visited your area, I was really impressed by the volunteer language training services that were being provided. It really struck home for me that a lot of our resettlement services are focused on urban centres, and that to have retention in rural communities is something that is really necessary. Do you want to talk a little more about the "travel to you" resettlement services that you might have piloted in your riding and that you think we could potentially expand?

Ms. Kristin Crane: It came about with a lot of nagging on my part and my saying, any time I was near the IRCC, “We need settlement services” and “we need settlement services”. Really, it was thanks to the IRCC. They stepped up and said, “Yes, we’ll fund it, and we’ll do it through a proven partner that has the capacity to deliver in your area.” It really was essential, I feel, to have something like an immigration partnership to create those connections in the community. It sped up that process. We knew who to introduce the settlement worker to and what organizations he needed to reach out to. Through those relationships that were built, it was about educating people on what settlement services are. Then the referrals started.

At this time, it has stabilized quite well, so it's quite predictable to him. He can say that he's going to be in this community on this day of the week and in that community on another day of the week, but he's still given that flexibility so that if something should come up, he can travel towards them. It's just a very easy relationship and an easy rapport.

I think that due to how well trained and approachable he is, it has worked extremely well. It relies upon libraries. Oftentimes, creating those physical spaces that are central in those small communities and having people drive newcomers to them takes a bit of a referral network, but it's very impactful once it happens.

The Chair: Thank you.

I might actually ask our analysts for a bit of help with that, because I don't think we know enough about it.

We may ask you for something in writing, because those of us who come from urban centres don't know.

I want to thank the panel. This was very helpful to us. I'm reminded of how I built a church in Yukon. There were some people who didn't think we needed an elevator because we didn't have any people with mobility issues, but we didn't have any people with mobility issues because we didn't have an elevator. We put in the elevator and we got people with mobility issues, and strollers and bikes and all of that stuff.

I think this is very helpful. How we can encourage people by providing services has to be included in our report. Thank you for this.

We'll suspend for a moment as we change our panel.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you for coming back to order as we continue our meeting.

I'm going to begin with testimony from the Calgary Chinese Community Service Association, Ms. Kwok and Ms. Hakemy, who are coming to us from Calgary.

Thank you.

Ms. Lily Kwok (Executive Director, Calgary Chinese Community Service Association): I'm Lily Kwok, the Executive Director of the Calgary Chinese Community Service Association. I'll give a very brief introduction of CCCSA.

We are a non-profit organization that is now 40 years old. Our mission is to connect the Chinese community and other ethnic communities to the mainstream, and we are committed to providing an inclusive society in which people's life-chances are maximized.

CCCSA's main target is immigrants, and we try to equip them with knowledge and skills. One important way we do that is to provide them with services to reduce social isolation so that they increase their confidence and independence and are better able to function in Canadian society.

We have four pillars of programs. One is integration and civic engagement, which we call ICE. Under this pillar, we have a lot of supports such as interpretation, one-on-one support, English programs and social inclusion exercises.

The next pillar supports children and youth. Again, this is for immigrant children and youth. We reach out to schools to organize after-school programs, social-norm activities, as well as career investigation.

There are two other pillars—law and advocacy, and family and wellness.

Under the ICE program, we have two English programs. One is called Stepping Stones, and the other is called computer-enhanced ESL literacy. We started Stepping Stones in 2002, and now it is 15 years old. After we started that in the Chinese community, we tried to bring it to the Sudanese and Punjabi communities, but due to a lack of infrastructure, it could not continue.

In 2006, we moved the program to the Afghan community, and we have now had that program in the Afghan community for nine years. This program is very well known in both the Chinese and Afghan communities, and it's getting more popular.

The other one, computer-enhanced ESL literacy, was once a Bow Valley College program, and it was transferred to us in 2015. Both programs are funded by Calgary Learns. We do not receive any IRCC funding. There are other communities that are requesting this program.

I'll give it to Nazifia to explain more about these programs.

• (1640)

Ms. Nazifia Hakemy (Program Coordinator, Calgary Chinese Community Service Association): Thank you, Lily.

It's a complete pleasure to be here to present our program to you. Thank you so much for giving us the chance.

Our programs, Stepping Stones and computer-enhanced ESL literacy, is for students with very low literacy. I know there are lots of LINC classes around that are based on the PBLA system. We are targeting students who have limited formal schooling; they have no education from back home. I have students who don't even know how to grab a pen and then how to write. These students are homebound and isolated. They could be seniors or mothers with children who haven't gone out to study for a long time. We are helping those individuals.

What is unique about our program is that we welcome everyone. We definitely focus on their ESL benchmark, but we do not limit them such that if they don't have certain marks, they cannot get into the class. It's open to them. They can come and they can learn more and then get a chance to go into a LINC class. We've had lots of students who graduated from our program and then eventually went to LINC classes to pursue their studies. That's one of the biggest successes of our program.

I also want to say that we have trained bilingual facilitators. For example, in the Chinese community, we have Chinese bilingual teachers helping these students. There are many reasons behind that. First of all, these students are isolated. They don't know how to get out of their homes, and they don't know how to go and follow a formal PBLA system. Once they come into the class and they see that the teacher is from their own culture and the teacher welcomes them with their own culture, then they feel more comfortable getting connected to the teacher and then to the learning.

The bilingual facilitator helps a lot in class. Ninety-five per cent of the class happens in English, but only 5% if a student is stuck. If they do not understand the material, we will help them in their own language. Especially when we do our needs assessment or pre- and post-evaluations, we definitely need help to make sure that the students are giving us the correct answer, so we approach them with their own language.

Right now the Stepping Stone program is happening in the Afghan and Chinese communities. We have bilingual facilitators. In the Chinese community, we have four terms, 45 hours every term, or 180 hours per year, and then in the Afghan community we have three terms, 30 hours every term, or 90 hours per year. We mostly target PB or CLB or lower students to make sure they get a chance to pursue their education.

Computer-enhanced literacy is for everyone. It's a multicultural program. Everyone is welcome to attend that program. When we are talking about computer-enhanced literacy, I'm not saying here that we're teaching these students the details of the computer. We are introducing technology to them. We all know how important technology is becoming now, so we introduce them to using an iPad, how to do banking online and so on.

• (1645)

The Chair: Can you hold on just one moment?

Ms. Nazifia Hakemy: Sure.

The Chair: I want to check, because the bells are ringing.

You have about 30 seconds to wrap up.

Ms. Lily Kwok: The outcomes we want to achieve are that our learners learn basic English skills. Sometimes it's just for social interaction and to navigate life in Canada, but also to bring them out so they are not isolated anymore. It's more than about their finding a job, but also about reducing their isolation in the community.

Ms. Nazifia Hakemy: Our success is that lots of other communities are approaching us for these kinds of English classes. Of course, the challenge is the lack of funds.

That's it.

The Chair: That's very good. Thank you very much.

Ms. Desloges, welcome back. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Chantal Desloges (Senior Partner, Desloges Law Group, As an Individual): Thank you for having me here today.

For those of you who don't know me, I'm a private bar lawyer with more than 20 years of experience, specialized in helping people to immigrate to and become citizens of Canada.

At the beginning of my career, I spent two years working with low-income clients, and for the remainder of my career, I've been assisting people of various economic backgrounds who can afford to pay for that service. I also do a significant amount of pro bono work for deserving clients who can't afford to pay.

Although I've never worked directly in settlement services, my profession takes me into almost daily contact with people who do provide such services. More importantly, I have more than 20 years of experience working with clients and observing how and why certain clients successfully transition into Canada while others fail to do so.

I noticed that a lot of the other witnesses whom you've called for this study on previous days have focused mostly on low-income families and refugees and how to better integrate them. As a result, I'd like to take a little bit of a different approach in my remarks today by focusing purely on economic immigrants and the reason why I believe Canada fails to retain and integrate many of them. I hope you find it sufficiently on topic.

Over the years, I've found myself increasingly disturbed about the amount of attrition I see in newcomers to Canada, as a result of our failing to retain and integrate them. What I mean is the degree of emigration from Canada that I observe. Literally, there is not a single day that goes by in my office that I don't speak to at least one person, and often more than one person, who went to a huge degree of effort and expense to become a permanent resident only to subsequently abandon Canada and return back to their home country.

Many of my colleagues describe the same experience, and I think if you multiply that across Canada, even anecdotally, we have a big problem. It strikes me as a terrible loss that we've put so much effort to attracting the best and the brightest to come to Canada, yet we've put comparatively little attention to tracking and understanding why people leave.

It's my observation that those client families who don't remain in Canada tend to leave for three main reasons.

Number one is economic. They can't find a job commensurate with their skills.

Number two is family ties. It's mostly parents who have been left behind.

Number three is that they never really intended to stay here in the first place.

I read with a lot of interest the brief that was filed by one of the organizational witnesses called MOSAIC. I agree with them wholeheartedly in their approach that Canadian work experience and re-skilling programs are totally crucial if you're going to address the gap between newcomer skills and the jobs that are actually available to them in Canada.

The world is a different place now from 20 years ago. Economic immigrants have a lot of choices for their future, and they don't want just any job; they want a good one that is commensurate with their experience. I've observed through my own client base and even just my own experience as a business owner that the options along the lines of those outlined by MOSAIC are extremely effective in achieving this. In fact, I have three people working for me full time who were hired through co-op placements, and two of those were new immigrants to Canada. So, mentorships, on-the-job training and co-op programs that introduce newcomers directly to employers in the workplace need to become the norm and not the exception.

A further observation is that those of my clients who obtained a Canadian educational credential either before or after immigration had much more success in economically establishing in Canada and were much more likely to stay in Canada over the long term. That's why a program like the Canadian experience class, for example, has been so successful.

For new permanent residents, however, often expense is the main challenge. I recommend prioritizing funding to subsidize re-education and re-skilling programs in a short period after arrival.

Family is also a main reason why people fail to successfully integrate and ultimately abandon Canada. Isolation, loneliness, lack of help with their children and concern for aging parents are powerful factors. In most countries of the world, people grow up in tight-knit, multi-generational families who often live together in one home and share responsibilities. Young families who immigrate to Canada lose that support network. The best-case scenario for a new immigrant family, even if they get a wonderful job immediately, is that they need at least three years of high-level tax returns before they can even think about applying to sponsor parents.

Realistically, it takes people more like five years.

I would recommend implementing ways to keep these families together from the start. One idea, for example, would be allowing economic class immigrants to include their parents on their application if they have sufficient funds to support that.

● (1650)

Another idea would be allowing people to sponsor their parents as caregivers for the grandchildren. In many cultures that's the norm, and it gives parents the opportunity to focus on career and education. There was, in fact, a recent Federal Court case in which the judge was openly perplexed as to why a visa officer would not consider allowing a caregiver work permit for grandparents when they clearly had raised several children of their own and had the relevant work experience.

Finally, my last observation—and I've said this publicly before—is that in general the more wealthy, accomplished and well established a person is in their home country, the less likely they intend to make Canada their permanent home. I've seen a huge

amount of abuse in the immigration system by individuals who just use permanent residence as a way to get their dependants to Canada in order to benefit from the various things that we offer to our permanent residents, but have no genuine desire to stay here and contribute professionally or economically.

It makes sense to screen out such people at the time they apply for permanent residence, as opposed to trying to deal with the problem later when they fail to meet the residency obligation. The act contains a mechanism for guarding against it, but I've literally never seen it used, and I think it should be used. Under paragraph 20(1)(a) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, it is required that every foreign national who seeks to enter or remain in Canada as a permanent resident must establish that they've come to Canada in order to be a permanent resident and live here permanently.

I believe that officers need to be alert to that issue as a part of the application process. Applicants should be held to the proof of it, when requested, in order to prevent both abuse of the system and attrition of permanent residents whom we spend so much time trying to attract.

● (1655)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Michelle Rempel): Ms. Desloges, you have about 30 seconds.

Ms. Chantal Desloges: Those are my remarks. I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Michelle Rempel): Great.

Mr. Whalen, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you all for coming.

Ms. Desloges, you've made some really great recommendations.

I'm not sure if you're aware of the Atlantic immigration pilot and the rural and northern pilot, which attempt to, in some way, address some of your concerns, particularly by allowing at least immediate family members to come to the country and put down roots. They also provide settlement services as part of the plan when the company brings them over and it eliminates the LMIA.

I'd love your thoughts on whether or not you think there should be any tweaking around that program. How can it better ensure that when people come to the country they're going to put down roots and help grow the particular part of the country where they land?

Ms. Chantal Desloges: First of all, that should be the federal approach. It shouldn't depend on where you live in Canada, where if you live in Atlantic Canada you are able to reunite your family or take advantage of those programs just by virtue of living there. That should be more widespread.

I haven't had experience working directly with that program, so I can't comment on the specifics of it. My colleagues who have worked with it feel it is an absolutely wonderful program that encourages people to really put down roots and stay.

Mr. Nick Whalen: You talk about a situation that I haven't seen a lot of in St. John's. Maybe it applies to the larger cities. I'm trying to wrap my head around how, in the immigration phase, if there's someone who's intent on scamming the program by just coming to the country, pretending they're coming to stay, then leaving their dependants and going back to earn money elsewhere.... If that was their intent and some type of fraud is occurring, I'm not sure how somebody would screen that out.

Do you have any particular examples where that was able to be screened out or would have been known from the beginning?

Ms. Chantal Desloges: If you look at a different area of immigration law where this is looked at, when a Canadian citizen wants to sponsor a spouse to come to Canada but the Canadian is not living in Canada, it's part of the process that they have to prove they intend to move back once the spouse gets a permanent resident visa. Visa offices often do this. They write a letter telling the Canadian to show them whatever evidence they have that they're really making plans to relocate. They put them to the proof of it. They ask if they've started looking for a job, started looking for accommodation, started transferring money over, if they have family in Canada and those kinds of things.

Mr. Nick Whalen: I'll turn to our guests from Calgary, Ms. Kwok and Ms. Hakemy. I like it when we hear from groups that are engaging in all this wonderful group without federal funding.

When you said that Calgary Learns pays, do you mean for all the services you provide, or is that just with respect to Stepping Stones and the computer-enhanced learning?

Ms. Lily Kwok: It's just the Stepping Stones and the computer-enhanced learning. For other programs we get United Way or city funding.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay.

It seems like you have been around for a long time and this funding model is working for you. Where do you see gaps? Where do you think that the type of funding you need to provide your service currently isn't being provided?

Ms. Lily Kwok: Actually, there are a lot of demands for our programs. The East Indian community, for example, is requesting similar programs because the bilingual facilitation models would work for them, and they are more interested in computer-enhanced literacy as well.

Even after 15 years we are still considered a pilot project. This pilot cannot go on. Sustainability has to be considered, so we are still looking for other funding so we can expand programs to other communities.

Mr. Nick Whalen: When you talk about the problem you're trying to address with Stepping Stones, where people are coming to Canada and they actually don't have good literacy skills in their first language, besides your program, are you aware of other successful programs that are being offered nationwide and we could contrast with yours?

• (1700)

Ms. Lily Kwok: I am aware of only one other, in Calgary, called Pebbles in the Sand. It also caters to people with very low literacy, but it provides teaching in English, so sometimes the progress is a

little slow because for difficult concepts, when you use a foreign language to explain something, it takes more time to understand.

I am not aware of other programs that are similar.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay.

If I understand correctly, Stepping Stones is more like bilingual language training in the person's own language and in English at the same time in order to speed up the process because they're unable to read textbooks that would help them.

Ms. Lily Kwok: Right.

Especially when we try to explain difficult concepts, we use our own language to make things retainable and easier to understand.

Mr. Nick Whalen: In addition to the East Indian community and the Afghan community you mentioned, did you also mention the Korean community? Who else is looking to establish this type of program?

Ms. Lily Kwok: Before we tried to work with the Sudanese community and the Punjabi community, but there was a lack of infrastructure. We had to organize the class within a house, but this was not very acceptable to our funder because it was not formal enough, so we had to terminate the program.

Mr. Nick Whalen: When you say "infrastructure", you actually mean physical space. It wasn't that you were looking for people with the necessary skills; it was actually physical space for the program.

Ms. Lily Kwok: Yes, the space is one thing and the culture is another thing, how to get people from different parts of the country. Sometimes they don't work in agreement, so bringing people together to be in a classroom is also challenging.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay.

I'm not sure if I have much time left, but I do have another question.

The Chair: You have about half a minute.

Mr. Nick Whalen: Okay.

Ms. Desloges, could you make one particular recommendation around skills recognition and where, in your experience, there is a gap? The federal government has put a lot of money into the labour market agreements with the provinces to help existing Canadians access retraining and re-skilling services. Is there anything along that line that we can do with respect to the newcomer population?

Ms. Chantal Desloges: So much has been attempted already, and I know that some of the regulatory problems are caused by the regulatory bodies themselves.

I would say, if I had one recommendation, it would be to provide funding assistance directly to people who are engaging in those retraining programs. Support them as they go through them.

I know quite a few people who have gone through these programs, particularly to become lawyers, and the main challenge they have is the expense and taking time away from working to be able to requalify. If they had the time and were able to devote energy to it, they could, but it's about money.

Mr. Nick Whalen: It is almost like a student loan for newcomers?

Ms. Chantal Desloges: That's correct.

The Chair: Thank you. I need to end it there.

I believe it's Mr. Maguire or Mr. Tilson who may share.

Mr. David Tilson: We are going to share.

To Ms. Kwok and Ms. Hakemy, with your presentation you've raised an issue that has come before the committee before, that people who come to this country who lack basic education, or who have literacy problems, or are women at home with children, or the elderly may not have an opportunity to learn the language that's required. That's obviously something your organization looks at.

Do you have any recommendations as to what the Government of Canada could do to assist groups such as yours in solving this issue? It sounds as though, with your organizations, it's very difficult to solve that issue when people come here with literacy problems or basic education problems. The other example is that of the women who are at home and who just aren't able to get involved.

Ms. Lily Kwok: Some of our learners want to look for jobs—maybe Nazifia can also talk about that—but we have a group of people who are actually quite isolated.

We want to look at language training that also addresses social inclusion and how to get them involved in the community. It is not that they look at language just to facilitate employment. Language is a means for integration so that they can bring the kids out to McDonald's or go to the zoo, and so that they are no longer isolated. This is the part I would strongly recommend.

I think sometimes the focus is just on providing language training for employment's sake, but this is not the case for a lot of people, especially for home-bound parents and grandparents. They just want to be in the community.

• (1705)

Mr. David Tilson: Ms. Kwok, I understand that. I'm looking at the type of person who has basic education problems, basic problems with literacy. That's a class of people who are obviously having difficulty, not just with language but with getting along in Canadian society.

Is there anything you've put your minds to that the Government of Canada can do to encourage groups such as yours to deal with that issue?

Ms. Lily Kwok: I don't have any recommendation in mind for now, but for social inclusion—

Mr. David Tilson: A lot of other people I've asked questions of don't either. It's a problem.

That's okay. Maybe I could ask a question to both of you, and to Ms. Desloges as well.

It appears from the evidence we've heard at committee that the IRCC's evaluation of settlement program says that employment-related services have the broadest positive impact on client outcomes.

How can we get employers to get involved in these programs? Are they likely to come along and say that they can't afford that?

I can tell you that in my riding, for example, there's a group—at this point I don't want to reveal the name of the company—that has

told me that they're having trouble finding people to work on assembly lines, and they will train them. They will provide services and training, but they don't know how to do it.

I'd like to hear from you, Ms. Desloges, whether you have any thoughts on that. I'm just saying that there's a company that's prepared to get involved in that and provide employment services to encourage not just language but also on-the-job training to provide employment.

Ms. Chantal Desloges: I think even offering a little bit of an incentive, maybe a subsidy or something for employers who are willing to do that, would be a good idea.

The situation you're describing is different, but I think a lot of Canadian employers' reticence is that they just don't have a big international understanding. They don't understand what it's like to have a university degree from India, for example, or to have work experience as an engineer in Saudi Arabia. They don't know what that looks like.

If they could be encouraged or incentivized to just give people a chance to get their foot in the door, those are the types of programs that work the best. Once they see that the person really can do what they're supposed to do, then it becomes very easy.

Mr. David Tilson: Have newcomers mentioned to you any difficulties that they've had gaining access to employment-related services?

Ms. Chantal Desloges: Not exactly, but I have heard people repeatedly say that the services they have access to are too basic. For the type of person who's going in and speaks English—maybe they have immigrated from Dubai or something like that and have a good employment history—they don't need help writing a resumé. That's too basic. They need actual practical introductions, mentoring and co-op placements. That's what they're looking for.

Mr. David Tilson: Ms. Kwok, how important are support services? I'm talking about child care, transportation, translation and those sorts of things. How important is that to the work you do?

Ms. Lily Kwok: These are very important, because a lot of our clients are quite homebound, as Nazifia said. If they have this kind of support, for example child care, it can release them so they can step out into society.

We provide a lot of interpretation services as well, because they need to know some of those basic things before they can fill out forms. In our classes we teach them how to fill out forms as well, so as to facilitate them in case they need to apply for anything. Even for a job, they need to know how to fill out those forms.

• (1710)

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

Ms. Kwan.

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Maguire just has a brief question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is it okay if Mr. Maguire asks a brief question?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Not if it's coming out of my time.

The Chair: No, it won't come out of your time.

Mr. David Tilson: Will we get another round?

The Chair: No, we have a business meeting.

Mr. David Tilson: Well, I wish you'd given me some notice, Mr. Chairman, that I was almost out of time. We had agreed that Mr. Maguire would share the time.

The Chair: I remind committee members always to start their clocks. I'm sorry.

Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I thank the witnesses for their presentation.

Mr. Chair, before I ask questions, I'd like to put on notice the following motion:

That, pursuant to Standing Orders 108(2), the Committee immediately undertake a study on the subject matter of the following provisions of Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget, tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019, and other measures: Part 4, Division 15 and Part 4, Division 16. That, recommendations, including amendments be submitted to the Standing Committee on Finance in a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, in both official languages; that, amendments provided by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration to the Standing Committee on Finance are deemed proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-97; that this study be comprised of no fewer than 8 meetings and; that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, the Minister for Border Security, and Departmental Officials be in attendance for at least one meeting.

Mr. Chair, as you'll note, we have received a letter from the chair of the finance committee, Mr. Wayne Easter. The letter references a motion that was passed at the finance committee. In that motion, though, it refers only to the citizenship and immigration committee, part 4, division 15 of the bill. That part deals with the establishment of the college, but it does not include the other significant bill—what I deem to be a stand-alone bill—in the budget implementation act. That's division 16, part 4, dealing with the asylum seeker changes. That provision calls for a change that's so significant it would render asylum seekers who cross over to Canada ineligible to make an application if they have made a previous application in five other countries.

The Chair: I hear your point. I'm just going to cut you off there. You can give notice of motion now, but you're now into debate about the motion—which you're able to do—but today is just notice of motion.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: No, I understand that.

It's in this context that I have asked for this notice of motion. We received this letter, Mr. Chair, from the chair of the finance committee asking whether or not the committee wants to study this issue. It cites only one bill, not the other significant bill. That, to me, is a major oversight and would be very detrimental, I think, to Canadians and most certainly to parliamentarians, who, I think, should be studying this issue at length.

The Chair: Thanks.

Notice of motion is received.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With that, I'll come back to the witnesses.

First I'd like to go to Ms. Kwok, if I may.

We've heard from your presentation about the importance of the services your organization provides, and the needs of newcomers.

My question is whether you have adequate resources to undertake this work. I ask because we were talking earlier about women who are isolated, and transportation and the need for child care and the space issue. Clearly, the infrastructure is not in place to accommodate the needs newcomers to help them resettle successfully.

I wonder if you can assist us by providing any recommendations or calls for action to this end to make sure that the resettlement supports are in place for NGOs such as yours.

• (1715)

Ms. Lily Kwok: We would like to see very accessible hubs within the community, where they can go to learn English, get social support and get benefits. They would address a lot of issues. With services around the downtown area, they have to take transport; they don't even know how to read the transit maps. Because community members can be mobilized to support each other as well, these could be very significant resources within the community. We are always looking at whether community hubs are a feasible model that could be implemented.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: How could government address this issue, particularly in the more rural communities, as opposed to the urban centres? It's more feasible to provide these services in the urban centres, but in the more isolated communities, what sort of infrastructure has to be in place to address that?

Ms. Lily Kwok: Even in cities, where we mention that it is easier, it is actually not. When we were in Calgary, we saw communities in the northwest and the north central part where there are huge immigrant populations. In some communities they are over 50% of the population, but they don't have services. They still have to go downtown to get services, which are very inaccessible. If we imagine it is easy in Calgary, that is not the case.

Sometimes we see big buildings, but they can only cater to that much. There are lots of needs in communities around there. We need a lot of outreach as well. I think the idea of having more of these smaller hubs in different locations will work better for different communities.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you for suggestion of having smaller hubs in different communities.

Aside from the geographic location, what about the funding for resettlement services? Do you feel you have sufficient resources to do the work you're doing currently, or do you think there needs to be additional support?

Ms. Lily Kwok: Our organization doesn't receive any IRCC funding. It is tough because we are doing a lot of this work, but because we are only recognized as an ethnic organization, we are not considered a settlement organization. These are some of the challenges we are facing.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Would you call for change in this regard? This is a problem in British Columbia too, by the way.

Ms. Lily Kwok: Yes, that is exactly what we need to see, so that this funding does not just go to settlement organizations but also to community organizations that are doing this kind of work.

The Chair: That's the end of your time.

Mr. Maguire, do you want one minute? We have two minutes till our committee business meeting starts.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just going to—

The Chair: That's from the Liberals, by the way.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Thank you. They'll be very happy with this as well.

I put forward a notice of motion on March 14, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You can do it during committee business, if you would like.

Mr. Larry Maguire: I'd like to do it now.

The Chair: You can do it now. Okay.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Yes, I put forward a notice of motion. I just want to move the motion now. A small change will be required, but it now reads that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), "Before the end of April 2019, that the Committee hold a two hour briefing with representatives from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to discuss the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot."

I would amend that to change the date to May 15, 2019.

I had originally put "Before the end of April", but we don't sit for the next two weeks. With everyone's agreement on that, I would move that now.

The Chair: I think we have unanimous consent to hold this briefing. We put in a request to IRCC officials to have the meeting.

They just asked us for a little more time to get prepared, because it's a brand new pilot and they don't have materials available. We can do that. I still think they will decline to come before that, because it's looking like the end of May. They have not said no, and they will do a two-hour briefing with us.

I think we have unanimous agreement that we want to hold this briefing.

Are you okay if we do it by the end of May?

● (1720)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Yes.

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: I'll take that as unanimous consent. There's no reason that they don't want to do it. It's just that they have to prepare materials.

We're going to suspend the meeting for a moment and go to an in camera business meeting for a few minutes. Mr. Maguire requested it. I also have a motion from Ms. Kwan that would be acceptable even though it's not been given 48 hours' notice. I think Mr. Whalen might have one as well. We're going to suspend as quickly as possible. I think there may be bells.

Thank you to the witnesses.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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