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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Bryan May**



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)):** Good morning. Pursuant to the order of reference of Friday, November 2, 2018, the committee is beginning its study of M-190, with regard to labour shortages in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. The committee will hear from the sponsor of the motion and from department officials today.

Without further ado, I'd like to turn it over to the sponsor of this motion. For the next hour, we'll be speaking with MP Peter Fonseca from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

You have 10 minutes for your opening remarks, sir. Those 10 minutes are all yours. Go ahead.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I thank everyone here for the opportunity to discuss this motion, M-190, and I thank you again for the unanimous support that this motion received on second reading.

Chair, I'd like to set the stage for motion M-190 today. Our government is proud of the \$180 billion we're investing in infrastructure. Both our residential construction sector and our ICI—the industrial, commercial, and institutional sector—are experiencing tremendous growth. We have an economy that has created 900,000 net new jobs since we took office. Our unemployment rate is at a 40-year low.

Our government is seizing the moment and seizing the opportunities for everyone: all Canadians, women and girls, men and boys, indigenous, everyone, no matter the colour of your skin, your sexual orientation, the place you came from or when you arrived, whether many generations ago or just yesterday.

Members, we need all Canadians at their best, so that they—we—can take advantage of these tremendous opportunities and contribute as a collective and personally to this prosperity, all the while growing our middle class and those working hard to join it.

M-190 is aimed at addressing the ongoing challenges that the construction industry is facing due to a lack of skilled labour in the sector within the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, the GTHA. I'd like to see recommendations that can be put forward, along with an

analysis of M-39, the Atlantic immigration pilot project, as a template, and the use of permanent immigration to assist in addressing this huge challenge.

The homes we live in, the businesses where we work, our hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, underground sewers and pipes, all of those places are built by construction workers. It's hard work, as temperatures on a work site can be as much as 30° below or 30° above. In many cases, it's back-breaking work for the men and women who build up our cities, towns and villages. Brick by brick, block by block and stone by stone, these mid-level skilled construction trades—bricklayers, form workers, framers and carpenters—are the backbone of the construction industry, and they're in short supply across the country.

The shortage is exacerbated, especially in the high-growth greater Toronto and Hamilton area. These are good-paying, family-sustaining jobs, but Canadian parents and schools are just not encouraging our kids to get into the mud-on-your-boots, dirt-in-your-fingernails type of work, as I always like to say. I've listened to stakeholders, labour leaders, workers, contractors and industry advocates together, who express major concerns in regard to a “severe”—in their words—labour shortage of qualified employees. With increased labour shortages, businesses not only are hampered momentarily, but also have significant planning and future growth challenges.

This motion is geared toward providing residents of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and all of Canada, with a plan for sustainable economic growth in the construction sector. The GTHA is home to a thriving construction industry. The construction sector has become Canada's biggest job generator, in percentage terms, consistently expanding and currently accounting for almost 5% of the entire Canadian labour market.

StatsCan projects that the population will grow and will reach an estimated 51 million by 2063. This projected increase in population will continue to drive construction demand for years to come. However, there is a critical shortage of skilled labour that is currently happening. Across Canada, it's expected that a quarter of the entire construction work force will retire in the next 10 years.

Just in Ontario, this mismatch of skills is projected at a \$24.3-billion loss in forgone gross domestic product, and a \$3.7-billion loss in provincial tax. Besides this forgone revenue, the labour shortage has far-reaching consequences for an industry that accounts for 6% of Ontario's GDP. As the Canadian population ages and more people are set to retire, it's estimated that 87,000 construction workers will retire within the next 10 years. That's nearly 20% of the Ontario construction workforce.

Looking forward, we see that an aging workforce and retirements will account for a higher share of new job openings over the next decade. While the age profile of the Ontario population shows that it is growing older, natural population growth plus immigration to the province should help sustain overall population growth across this scenario period.

• (1110)

Nevertheless, the pool of available local youth entering the workforce is in decline, while retirements are on the rise. Construction employment in Ontario has increased by approximately 200,000 workers since 1997 and now accounts for 6.9% of total Ontario employment. However, at the pace the industry is growing, it will not only need to replace this retiring personnel, but it will need to attract additional workers, with estimates ranging from 20,000 to 80,000 new recruits needed by 2027 to keep up with demand in Ontario alone.

Currently, a distortion exists among youth, skills and skilled trades. The nature of employment is currently changing. However, the skilled trades will continue having a strong labour demand in the foreseeable future. Skills Canada has stated that it estimates that in the next 10 years, 40% of new jobs will be in the skilled trades, but only 26% of young people aged 13 to 24 are considering pursuing a career in the skilled trades. This information is consistent with trades not appealing to those aged 13 to 24. Skilled trades tend to be a second choice for most, with routes to university or college seen as the preferred path. There has to be a concerted effort in demonstrating that trades are an equal route to personal success and satisfaction, an equal first choice.

Demand in the construction industry is expected to grow in the foreseeable future. Polls indicate that 32% of contractors expected more business in 2018 as compared to 2017, while 51%, when asked, stated they expected the same level of business and activity. These studies all point to a very confident and healthy construction sector.

Additionally, there will be a continued demand due to immigration growth, government affordable housing programs, climate change mitigation, maintenance and renovations. It's imperative to study the labour shortage in order to create policies that will enable that construction sector to thrive and continue to provide good, well-paying jobs for Canadians.

The incentive towards having young people pursue careers in the skilled trades may take time to catch on and be implemented. There needs to be a policy implemented that will ensure continuity between a generation of retiring skilled labourers and the construction industry's increased demand for skilled labour. Just four years from now, there will be more seniors than there will be children enrolled in high school, while by 2030, there will be just two people in the

workforce for every one who is retired. This demographic shift that is beginning to take place will have a drastic impact upon the labour market, especially in the construction sector.

Critics argue that the skills shortage is exaggerated, as there remains youth unemployment within Canada. Yet professional associations, along with the industry professionals, all agree that there is a shortage within the workforce that will only continue to grow. Unemployment among older and experienced workers is at an all-time low, with the numbers dipping under 3%. This trend indicates that older workers are staying in the job longer, while younger workers lack the necessary skills to fill those vacancies. From a policy-making perspective, collaboration with all involved stakeholders is required—employers, apprentices, journeypersons, employees and unions. The entire scope of the phenomenon needs to be studied.

Private member's motion 39, about immigration as a means of growth in Atlantic Canada, commissioned a study of the ways to increase and retain immigrants to Atlantic Canada, with an objective of implementing policies that will strengthen the workforce and provide economic growth. Although there are differences between the construction sector and the entire economy of Atlantic Canada, valuable information is available from the implementation of M-39.

As the construction industry continues to grow, it's also subject to a dramatic demographic shift. Construction has provided opportunities for success for generations of immigrants and Canadians alike. The industry has provided skill-building opportunities while serving as a launching pad for so many immigrants coming to Canada in hopes of building a better future, helping to construct homes and building what is now the primary capital asset for most Canadians.

• (1115)

M-190 hopes to address the current challenges that are associated with the lack of skilled labour in the GTHA construction sector. I would like to see recommendations put forward to assist the industry and to look at the Atlantic model as a template for providing the industry with the skilled construction workers it needs.

Again, I want to thank the committee for this opportunity.

Chair, I look forward to answering the members' questions.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Fonseca.

Thank you for bringing forward this issue. There are very few of us here who haven't had both employers and unions come to them over the last couple of years bringing this issue to light.

We'll start with questions from MP Barlow, for six minutes.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks, Mr. Fonseca, for bringing this forward. You and I had some conversations when this was being debated in the House, and I want to reiterate the concerns I had at that point.

Even though we voted to support the motion, I would have rather seen something with a larger scope. The fact that this has a pinpoint focus on the GTA and Hamilton area, and only in the construction industry, I think does a disservice. As you said in your presentation, this is an issue that impacts the entire economy. We in rural communities certainly hear about it in the agriculture sector, especially in food processing and large greenhouse operations, just to name a couple. I think this would have been a better motion had we been able to expand it to include other industries, but we are here and will deal with what's in front of us.

I found it interesting to hear you in your presentation speaking very proudly of the \$180 billion that the Liberal government has committed for infrastructure spending. I think it's worth noting for the record, however, that only 6% of that \$180 billion has actually been earmarked for any new project. That's well behind the pace you should reach.

I have had ministers in my neck of the woods multiple times announcing projects over and over again, including ones that were done by the previous Conservative government, such as the Green Line in Calgary. I would rather see resources put to addressing some of the concerns you have than pay for ministers to travel across the country re-announcing projects.

That being said, there is one thing I would like to ask you, and I would hope we get some resolution to it. We were trying to get the minister here to talk about the supplementary estimates.

One thing in the supplementary estimates that I find interesting is that \$35 million has been set aside for a program about worker protections, which is basically an audit system whereby Service Canada auditors will go into businesses. They don't have to give notice; they can just walk onto the business premises, walk into the office and start going through computers and files.

The audits that are done on some of these businesses that are using the temporary foreign worker program specifically, or maybe even express entry, are very stressful. Some of our stakeholders have gone through this process, and the audit can take up to two years in some cases, which many times can bring a business to a screeching halt. If we are looking at ways to improve the temporary foreign worker program.... This is scaring some businesses off from even applying for it.

I would like your opinion on this \$35 million that is in the supplementary estimates for this worker protection program, to increase the audits and inspections of businesses that use the temporary foreign worker program.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you very much for the questions, Mr. Barlow.

What I can speak to is that, being on the road and speaking to the construction sector—that's the employers, the contractors, organized

labour, non-union shops—I hear from them that they are growing and expanding. The one thing that is holding them back is the need for a labour supply.

There are homes on hold because they can't find the next bricklayer. For projects in municipal infrastructure, whether affordable housing or pipes or bridges, it's the same concern that continues to come up.

That's why I've brought this motion forward. I know you speak to all of Canada, and I've spoken to members from coast to coast to coast. I agree with you that there are labour shortages and there are gaps. Why is my focus on the GTHA? That's probably where the demand is greatest. If you look at the construction sector, in particular in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, you see that it's growing at about double the rate for the province and the country, at about 8% growth.

What we've learned from the Atlantic model—and I'd hoped the committee would be able to look into the Atlantic model and what has come out of that—I would like to then be able to have that applied to the GTHA. That's why you want it contained. If it works there, it could be rolled out to your riding and to many of the members' ridings from coast to coast to coast.

I do understand that it is a challenge. In a way, it's one of the good challenges that we can have, with the amount of growth that we've had—900,000 net new jobs in the country—and the amount of investment that is going into infrastructure. I believe this is the right time to fill that gap and get away from these temporary foreign workers and the LMIA's, etc. What we're talking about here, just like in the Atlantic, is immigrants coming in and setting down roots, being able to have a bricklayer coming from another country—

● (1120)

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thanks. I don't want to interrupt, but I just have 30 seconds left. I have one other quick question for you.

Have you had discussions with some of the provincial associations? We do have immigrants coming. I don't have any specifics, but they can't get their credentials recognized at the provincial level because of unions or provincial organizations and associations that won't recognize those credentials. We can do everything we can, but unless we bridge that gap as well.... I think that is something we have to focus on.

Have you had conversations with some of those provincial organizations to loosen some of those restrictions as well?

**The Chair:** Please give a very brief answer, if you could.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** That's a great question, Mr. Barlow.

I've had discussions with all of them: the Canadian Home Builders' Association, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, BUILD, and our largest labour organizations. They're doing a great job. They're doing a lot of training, etc. We have to break this stigma where the trades are seen as a second choice and not a first choice. They are all onside. We want a concerted effort to be able to address this gap and to provide labour, not only for today, but well into the future.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Morrissey, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to follow up on my colleague Mr. Barlow's question. Looking at the Atlantic pilot, one of the issues is that the prioritization or the identification of the skills gap still has a lot to do with the provinces. We have to identify that. A point that was made was that you need to get the buy-in at the provincial level, on the ground, so that will be critical in targeting and prioritizing the skills gap that you've identified in your area. Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** That's a great question, Mr. Morrissey. Having spoken with the major associations.... In Ontario, that's the Ontario Home Builders' Association and BUILD, which represents all of the various contractors, as an umbrella group. We've had ministers from the present government, as well as the previous government, who have spoken to this shortage. They would like to see something done.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Will the Ontario government prioritize?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** I haven't spoken to the Ontario government, but what we have heard from this administration, as well as the previous administration, is that this is definitely a pressure point, something that needs to be addressed. We're all trying to do it.

The best way to do it is to be able to get Canadian kids to fill those gaps. That's not happening as quickly as we need. With this aging population, this kind of tsunami coming along, what we need is a new way, a way to be able to fill that gap, and not in a band-aid, temporary type of solution. We're talking about permanent residency, citizenship, a bricklayer coming here, or a carpenter, form worker or framer.

Again, back to Mr. Barlow, as well as Mr. Morrissey, these are not regulated, certified professions. They're not like your electrician or pipefitter, etc. These are what may be deemed, at times—not by the industry but by government—low-skilled. You tell me that someone going out there and trying to build a wall of bricks or stone is a low-skilled worker. It's a poor term used for the industry.

●(1125)

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Yes, okay.

I have a couple of questions.

Mr. Fonseca, you're on the ground in your area, and you've identified this as a critical issue. Could you elaborate briefly on where in the country we are getting the disconnect between the statistics that are compiled by the department responsible—statistics that say that's not quite the case—and the reality? We do face it in

several industries, and it tends to be in areas where the criteria we are currently using do not identify these as critical skills or high skills.

I want you to comment on that, and then I also want to follow up and ask you a question. You made the statement that you would like to see this committee put forward recommendations to address this. What are those key pieces? If you had two recommendations that you feel would address the situation that's confronting you in the unique area of the GTA, what would they be?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** That is a magnificent question.

I think what often hampers government is that we are not nimble enough, fast enough or flexible enough to be able to address the need in the marketplace. By the time we're addressing that need, the need may not be there, or it has changed the whole labour market, the industry.

I go by what the associations say, what the employees say and what the employers say. Everybody is saying the same thing, which is rare.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** So you have unanimity on this issue.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Yes, there is unanimity.

Across the board, what they have said is that they are experiencing a severe—that's in their words, "severe"—labour shortage in the construction sector. It's not going to stop this year. What happens is that, as we continue to build, as we continue to see our population, our cities, our towns and villages grow—

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** What's the recommendation, then?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** The recommendation would be to listen to industry and to move more quickly as a government. Sometimes we have to get out of offices, put our feet on the ground and really go onto job sites and listen to what's being said. Then, we need to be able to act quickly for our economy, for jobs, for our workers and for our communities.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Do I have a full minute?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Obviously, when you look at these, depending on the area or region you look at, there are different challenges. As a government member, I'm often forced to defend against, "You're allowing too many immigrants into the country, and they're taking jobs from Canadians," which is a contradiction.

How do you balance the two, when clearly you can demonstrate that there is a critical need? Have you been able to quantify the cost to the Canadian economy of allowing this to go unaddressed? It would have a drag on the economy if we cannot provide the critical skilled labour in these key areas.

**The Chair:** He has left you only about 15 seconds, I'm afraid, to answer that question.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** This is an economic driver. These are people who would be coming in and hitting the ground right away. They would be working almost on day two. They go through their health and safety check. They get on the job site, and they're contributing through taxes right away to our country. This would be a great opportunity for Canada to close a gap and grow jobs.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Duvall is next, for six minutes.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Fonseca. I appreciate your bringing this forward. As I said in the House, we want to see this report done and find out whether there are flaws in it and where we can go in the future.

You have stated that we have a severe labour shortage, yet BuildForce, which is a national construction association, has basically said that... I'm reading from a report by the Library of Parliament that states:

The report also considered the demand for and supply of labour in the GTA. It concluded that in the residential sector, "established patterns of recruiting and mobility are sufficient to meet job requirements" in all construction related occupations in 2019 and beyond. In many cases, current labour supply noticeably exceeds the needs of the sector.

Can you respond to that?

• (1130)

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you very much, Mr. Duvall.

BuildForce has put together some great information and done an excellent analysis. I have the BuildForce document right here in front of me. It talks about the trades and occupations. I'm looking at residential right now, and they show here a gap well into 2027. This is from the report they put together for 2018 to 2027.

These are the highlights they see. Within the report, they talk about severe shortages. They say, "Recruiting and mobility may extend beyond traditional sources and practices." That's what's necessary. They also say, "Employers may need to compete to attract needed workers. Established patterns of recruiting and mobility are sufficient to meet job requirements." But this is well into later years.

They have put together an excellent matrix that I think we can all go by. They've broken down all the various trades—be they carpenters, concrete finishers, construction estimators—and they show that there is a shortage. They are doing an excellent job and continue to recruit and bring more young people into the trades. What they always talk about is this gap, this 20,000- to 80,000-person gap that will affect the building of our communities.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Okay, thank you.

You're referring to the non-residential construction. It also states, "the labour supply of almost all occupations was projected to be sufficient."

I'm confused about what we're saying here in the committee and what is in this report. Is there a shortage or isn't there a shortage? I went to Hamilton and met with my people in the building trades and in the carpenters union. They're basically saying that there is no labour shortage. They're saying that they're convincing young Canadians, women and aboriginals, and even challenging people to come to the trade because of the starting wage. Yet it's the non-union

employers and some other unions that are paying low wages, which cannot attract those people.

Is it the wage difference?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Mr. Duvall, I'll go back to the report. The report actually breaks down the entire province of Ontario and shows that the focus where labour is needed is in the GTHA, at the highest end.

Having spoken to the skilled trades, to labour, I note they've all been saying the same thing. A number of them, I know, will be here as witnesses to this committee. What I've heard from them is that they are looking for... I'm not talking about the regulated or certified trades. The certified trades are different—electricians, etc. There may not be shortages there. The shortages exist among what are deemed low-skilled labourers, a term which, again, I do not like: carpenters, form workers, framers, bricklayers.

What happens is that our immigration system has not been allowing or has not been bringing these types of workers forward. What we've been trying to do is fill those gaps through the temporary foreign worker program, through LMIA's, etc., and what I'm hearing is that it's not working.

You could talk to organized labour about this; you can talk to the contractors. It's not working for anybody. They want permanent Canadians who can contribute to the community, contribute to the economy, build a family here. As you said, these are good-paying, family-sustaining jobs.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Thank you for that.

The other thing you mentioned is that you want to see the Atlantic immigration program. The Atlantic immigration program does not require labour market screening, which is also known as a labour market impact assessment.

Are you asking for that in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, that we would not have to do an impact assessment and we would just put the jobs up on the board and get to bring these people in?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** No, that is not what I'm saying. I'm saying that it has been analyzed quite a bit. BuildForce has analyzed it. Others have analyzed the marketplace. Take the analysis that exists already, in aggregate, and then come up with a model that will close the gaps that everybody is talking about. Nobody has said that there is no gap. Everybody has said there is a gap. We have a shortage, so projects are on hold. I don't care if it's affordable housing in your community or if it's pipes and sewers; whatever it is, what allows our economy to move forward is being somewhat hampered by not having these workers.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** MP Sangha, please.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Peter, for coming today for this great study.

I have seen a labour shortage in the GTA, in my riding of Brampton Centre. There is a tremendous shortage of manpower, though people are coming from outside. Still, the people out there.... Many small and medium-sized enterprises are closing their businesses or are on the verge of closing their businesses because they don't have manpower.

Your motion is only for construction workers. I do agree, but at the same time.... I appreciate your presentation, where you have given very specifically how you can improve this labour shortage in the industry, but I'm still not very clear. As Mr. Duvall has said, which way are you thinking about? Do you want the labour people to come to Canada, or internally the people to work here? How will you promote our own youth, the kids, to come into this industry and work for this industry? Do you have some suggestions on that?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you very much, Mr. Sangha.

I've heard the same concerns from Brampton, Mississauga, and across the country, but in no way is this limited to any size of company: small, medium-sized or large companies. We have heard from everybody, from small contractors all the way to our largest builder, Mattamy Homes.

You're right. It's a multipronged approach, and that's what I'm hearing from all the members. What the industry has said is, "Yes, we continue to recruit, but we're not getting enough people into this labour market"—especially, again, for these types of skilled trades or the ones that I've spoken about, the bricklayers and carpenters and so on.

What's not working is what we have in place today. We try to fill that gap just through temporary foreign workers and so on, but why would we want to do that when we know that this gap, as has been studied, will exist for decades to come? Why do that? Why not look at a way to fill the gap with people who are in their twenties or thirties, and continue, and then with Canadians...?

I know we also want young people to be able to get into the trades and not have the stigma that the trades may sometimes have. These are high-paying jobs. Yes, at times you do get, as I said, mud on your boots and you get your fingernails dirty, but these are the types of jobs that can help you build a family and build a community.

For a job where you get to see, at the end of the day, something you've built, or know that you're driving on the road you constructed, or see that building that people are living in, that you've put together, that's amazing.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** I know. You're giving the suggestion that we have to fill that gap and we have to see how new programs can be set up so we can fill those vacancies, but as Mr. Duvall also asked, I will again ask you the question: What is your proposal on that?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** My proposal for our government would be for more investments, of course, in destigmatizing the trades, as well as more dollars for training, to be able to get more of our young people through our training programs, ensuring that they have the health and safety that's required so they are safe on the job site and they're able to build that skill set, as well as ongoing training, because that never stops, to be able to have that skilled workforce that we want here in Canada to grow our economy.

That's what I'd like to see: building what we have, taking what we may have in the rough today and turning that into diamonds in terms of our young people, as well as for the sake of the industry to fill the gap, to have another stream towards permanent residency and then citizenship.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** I understand that when we go through the LMIA and TFW process, it's very lengthy.

Employers have to place an advertisement and select the people. It takes two or three months to select them. Employers then apply for LMIA and spend \$1,000 for each applicant. Fifty per cent are refused. Officers are so adamant. I don't know why. They refuse more than 50% of applications. Then it's time to go for immigration. Then, at the end, you're not sure that you will get all of them through immigration. It's a lengthy process, so when do you want this system to start?

• (1140)

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** I'd like to start today, if we could, just like the Atlantic model.

What I have said is that this is an economic driver. You have people who would show up today and be able to work tomorrow. They would be paying taxes. They would be building up their skill sets. They would be helping employers. They may even start their own businesses. As I said, we will need construction workers on an ongoing basis. We're not filling this gap fast enough. Why would we want to have a temporary foreign worker or an LMIA program to bring in somebody who will work here but then leave with that skill and with whatever dollars they've collected, rather than have that experience and that person here? I think we want to build Canada through immigration and through a program like this.

**Mr. Ramesh Sangha:** Thank you, Mr. Fonseca.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

It's over to Mr. Hogg, please.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Fonseca, for talking about skilled labour. As a former bricklayer's helper for a year, I'm feeling kind of skilled and buoyed by the wonderful attributes I had, which have now deserted me.

Anecdotally, looking at the Atlantic immigration pilot program, certainly we've had the same issue in metro Vancouver, where many construction workers are charging.... They're getting a bonus. They're getting transportation paid to come into metro Vancouver. Is this an issue of affordability, as much as anything else, affordability with respect to metro Toronto and metro Vancouver, which are two of the places that have...?



I bring that up because I know of two physicians who are married and who say they can't afford to live in metro Vancouver, and they're earning much more than any of the people we're making reference to. Is there a strong correlation between housing affordability, the cost of living and this issue?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Mr. Hogg, there is.

We often hear about not enough supply in terms of places to live, and also about getting businesses expanded. It is about making sure that we have that workforce. You're quite right; I have heard from contractors who have had to change the way they build some homes and businesses, in terms of the products they use and how they're built, because they don't have the labour supply to be able to do it.

If you're a builder and you're trying to put together hundreds or even thousands of homes at a time, and you don't have the particular skill set, you will say, "Okay, not bricks. We'll have to put siding on here" or whatever. You'll have to change the way you do things, and not for the better. They'd rather do it in a quality way. They'd rather be able to afford it, so that supply is necessary. The only way we're going to close the gap on the supply is to be able to close the gap on labour.

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** You've suggested the Atlantic immigration pilot program as perhaps a template to look at. Do we have any metrics with respect to people who come into that program and whether or not they stay there, whether they're there a year later? The reason I ask is that, anecdotally, we had a job fair at a high school in metro Vancouver, and I think the families of five of the people in grade 12 who were being interviewed had come in on the Atlantic program and were now living in British Columbia. I just wonder whether we have any metrics, whether we track that and know exactly how many actually stay in the area.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Thank you, Mr. Hogg.

I don't have those stats with me. Anecdotally, I've read some reports. I know that getting the program up and started was a little challenging at first, but in the second year there has been a great deal of success. It's been region to region, or province to province, in terms of the success they've had in being able to fill some of those labour gaps.

As for what this would do, when you look at the Atlantic model, it was just getting back to the ability to be nimble enough to bring in a workforce that would help a company expand. What we would see in the GTHA, as well as the entire country, is that ability for organized labour—I've heard this from employers, contractors and associations—to bring in that labour through a stream in working with the provinces, as in the Atlantic model. Of course, if you're bringing that labour into your region to help it expand in your region or to help with the gap you have in labour, you wouldn't want it moving elsewhere. I don't see that happening.

What I've seen is a need for more of these workers. You can go to any job site in the greater Toronto area—it may be the same in Vancouver—and you will see that many of the workers are in their fifties and even their sixties now. They're going to retire. This is not easy work. They continue to do the work, and I have employers who continue to beg them to come back and will pay a lot more for their services because they can't find others to address their shortage.

Again, I go back to how many times bureaucrats and others see this as no-skill or low-skill work. Try to frame a house or try to frame a business or do some formwork. You've done bricklaying. It's not something that you just pick up in one day and start doing. You need the training to be able to do it as a skilled craftsperson, but also as somebody who wants to invest in that trade.

I don't think we're doing it really well here in Canada. Look at other places, at Europe, at Austria and Germany, etc. They will start you in the trades in your teens, at 17 and 18 and even earlier. You have kids who are 16 years old and already learning how to do this stuff, and they become artists. They are artists. Look at the work that's done here on Parliament Hill.

•(1145)

**Mr. Gordie Hogg:** I have 20 seconds. I would like to know whether there are other jurisdictions in the world where this has been looked at, whether it's the European model or others. Also, you talked about the collaborative approach in doing analysis and metrics. Could you describe what that collaborative approach would look like and what kind of direction you're suggesting this committee take? What would that collaborative approach look like? What would the metrics be? How long would that take? What types of actions would grow out of it?

**The Chair:** Very quickly, please.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Well, I also hope it can be "very quickly", Mr. Chair, and I hope we can do this very quickly because I think the analysis and metrics, etc., have all been done by the industry. We don't have to go out there and do it again. It has all been done. In terms of the countries that I just brought up, many countries in Europe believe in the trades and have a partnership with employers and with labour—with everybody—and it is one smooth continuum. That continuum allows for a robust industry. They can see it as it's progressing.

The industry has put this together for us. It's just a matter now of taking the initiative and implementing something that we have already done with the Atlantic model.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Falk, please.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Thank you.

I just want to address something. When you were talking to Mr. Morrissey, you mentioned how sometimes we need to be on the ground with constituents or stakeholders or that type of thing, and I would actually argue that we should be doing that all the time, every time we are in our riding.

I think if we did a lot more of that, or more members of Parliament did that, we would see how legislation like Bill C-69 is actually very detrimental to a lot of the ridings in Canada, coast to coast; it doesn't matter where. I think being able to see the work that is done and what Canadians are doing and how they're putting food on their table.... For example, the oil industry uses tons of different trades.

It's interesting for me...and we've discussed this before in this committee, when we studied youth employment. Being younger, I do fall in the millennial generation, and where I'm from, going into the trades is encouraged, because they are high-paying jobs. Kids are encouraged to get a job at a shop sweeping floors, which turns into something else, whether it's mechanics or welding or carpentry, whatever it is. That's encouraged where I am, in my part and region of Canada.

The second thing I want to touch on is that you made mention of destigmatizing the trades, and it's been talked about a couple of times. How do we change the perception and destigmatize the trades, when your leader, the Prime Minister, makes a comment about a gender-based analysis for rural construction workers? How does that help promote women, promote men, young boys, whoever it is, into those trades, when they hear comments like that from the top of the country, the leader of the country saying things like that? I've had many constituents contact me, very upset and offended by that statement, because that's not who they are. These are construction workers who are going into places like rural Saskatchewan or Manitoba and working on roads, or doing infrastructure on bridges or ferries or whatever it is.

I'm just wondering how we destigmatize that, when it's coming from the top of the top in Ottawa.

• (1150)

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Mrs. Falk, thank you very much.

The main thing we can agree on—and I believe with all the members—is that the most important thing we can do is to be on the ground and to visit those businesses, visit homes, visit our constituents, and have the opportunity—the privilege that we have—to travel from coast to coast to coast to see other communities. I think it's the number one priority in our being able to do our job here in Ottawa.

I'm very proud of the Prime Minister, who has gone coast to coast to coast and has spoken to our youth, spoken to our seniors, met with indigenous men and women, old, young—it doesn't matter who. You will find that our Prime Minister is out. Every day that he is not here in Parliament, he is out on the road speaking to Canadians. He is always out there. You will see him every single day, and he answers every single question. He is—

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** I will actually argue about that with you, because he doesn't.

There was a young woman in Regina, at a town hall, who was very offended because she was a young woman in the construction industry working in rural Canada and he totally—

**Mr. John Barlow:** That's right.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** —didn't answer the question. He glazed over it and went on. First of all, that isn't feminism, because he isn't addressing her question. She is a woman who is breaking way in these trades that a lot of women don't go into for whatever reason, whether it's personal choice or they're not encouraged or whatnot.

I think that is something that needs to be taken into consideration if we're trying to change the culture of something like the trades. Every action, every statement, every word that comes out of this

place has a reaction, whether positive or negative, whether we see it or not.

I think it is important not to turn a blind eye to something like that, especially because I think it is very important to your motion. Women bring something different that men can't bring to the table, just in the way we're wired and created, so I think we shouldn't just glaze over things. Sometimes when we do make mistakes, we just need to say, “Oh, I'm sorry” and move on.

How much time do I have?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Should I answer that, Mrs. Falk?

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** No, that's okay. I just wanted to make a statement, being the woman at the table today.

I know you talked about—or it has been talked about—the possibility of getting rid of LMIAs and TFWs. How would we achieve that? We do have a shortage in every.... It's not just in construction; it's in fast food or wherever. A lot of people are utilizing child caregivers, utilizing the LMIA and TFW program. I would argue that a lot of those people who come to Canada with an LMIA have the intention of staying, bringing their family and being incorporated into Canadian society. What is an alternative if we move away from that program?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Mrs. Falk, first off, it's been great seeing the Prime Minister being on job sites and getting up there, rolling up his sleeves, speaking to women and men construction workers and talking about the importance of this work. That's on the Prime Minister.

With regard to the LMIA and TFW program, I'm not saying it's either/or. What I am saying is that what is not there right now is a model to be able to provide for those who want to come in, as well as for employers, organized labour and others who would like some permanent residency pathway to citizenship for these workers. That doesn't exist today, the same way it didn't exist in the Atlantic before the Atlantic model.

I'm asking, as part of filling that gap, to bring in a model that will help. It will be multipronged.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk:** That's a model to bring in for PR, basically, permanent residency. That's what you're saying.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** That's right. Someone would come in as a permanent resident on the way to immigration, although—

Yes, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Sorry, but that's time.

Now up for six minutes is Mr. Ruimy.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.):** Thank you. I'll be sharing my time with PS Adam Vaughan.

Before I hand it over, I just want to make a comment on how I think this is an appropriate motion. When we look at Canada, one in six Canadians is a senior. In the next 15 to 20 years, it's going to be one in four. In the next four years, five million Canadians are going to retire. We have the second-oldest workforce in the world. We need to find pathways to citizenship, or else we're not going to be able to build things. That's why this is so critically important. That's why I'm looking forward to moving forward with this study.

Thank you for being here today. I'm going to pass my time on to Mr. Vaughan.

• (1155)

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.):** There are a couple of things.

One of the issues we're hearing about as we work with municipalities on the infrastructure program is that, even though the 10-year program has \$181 billion committed—\$19 billion of which has gone out the door, which is a lot more than 6%, and even more when you add the gas tax of \$2 billion a year and the \$5.7 billion on housing—we know that the money is allotted when receipts are received from municipalities.

In other words, we'll grant a \$6-million construction approval to a municipality, but if they can't get workers to build it, we don't pay the bills until the bills go out. The money stays in the treasury until such time as a municipality submits a bill. If municipalities aren't getting workers, the project stalls. In other words, the \$6 million is still going to be spent, but it won't be spent building stuff until the workers arrive.

How often have you heard about municipalities not being able to find workers and therefore not being able to invoice the federal government for money we've committed to them?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** I hear about it every day. We hear it from those who are out there, who are not going to be able to get to their next job because they are just not going to have the labour force to do that. From municipalities, we hear that they need public transportation infrastructure built. They need—again, going back, and sometimes it's not sexy—the stuff that's underground, the pipes and sewers. And they need affordable housing. It is a big stressor today, especially in the GTHA. To get that built, we need a bigger workforce, because they're working on all these other important projects, but the municipality can move only as fast as the labour it has.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan:** I was in Woodstock, a small community in southwestern Ontario, which has three co-investment fund projects under construction right now. I was talking to the construction workers, who said that most of their friends are being sucked into Toronto, where the wages are higher because the housing market is so much more intense. The mayor of Woodstock was saying that the smaller communities, in particular, cannot overbid the big cities, which are drawing in labour from the smaller communities. This is also resulting in delays for smaller communities.

In other words, if you don't solve the problem in Toronto, it's having a ripple effect into smaller communities where they can't pool the labour force to get their infrastructure programs, so you're hearing about how far workers have to come into Toronto to get the good wages that are on offer.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** Well, I believe that in construction, for the most part, they're all pretty good wages. Again, they're family-sustaining types of jobs.

I can see how the magnet of the GTHA is pulling in workers, and how it would be difficult for some of our towns, villages and not-so-urban areas to keep that labour pull, and they may be coming in. Being able to stop the challenge posed by municipalities that want to get these projects completed, by adding and bringing in more labour, would be an opportunity.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan:** It's the same in Alberta. Legions of construction workers leave Atlantic Canada to work in Alberta. It means that Atlantic Canada has a problem holding on to its labourers, which means that executing its infrastructure program becomes more costly and more difficult. The same thing is happening in Ontario.

There's another issue we're hearing about. I got a call from the mayor of North Bay, who said, "I know that my member of the provincial parliament doesn't like these border crossers, but are there any labourers there? We need to build a school." So you have smaller communities demanding that immigration patterns fit their labour markets, but we're not providing that labour service.

What are we doing to specifically target and upgrade the point system so that instead of allowing doctors quick entry into the country, we allow labourers, who are needed, to come in with the skills they have to go to work immediately? Have we looked at changing the point system so that, instead of prioritizing Ph.D.s and nuclear physicists or whatever, we're actually prioritizing bricklayers, construction workers and marble cutters, the way we did in the 1950s after the Second World War?

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** I think we all hear the types of stories you're bringing up. I've talked to some of the companies that work in roofing, some big Portuguese Canadian companies. I'll say, "You don't have these types of roofs in Portugal. What makes these workers, who do other types of roofing, so good?" They'll go, "You know what? They have to put food on the table and they have the skill set." It's not only the skill set to be able to do the work; it's also the attitude. Even coming from warm countries, they'll work at 30° below or 30° above. They want to put food on the table. They want to grow a family here. They are here for the long term. That's what they want to do.

If we're providing that doorway, that window, I think we're doing a great thing not only for that immigrant, that family, that asylum seeker or refugee, or someone who's come in who can look at the trades, but also for growing the Canadian economy.

● (1200)

**Mr. Adam Vaughan:** In talking to the building trades in Toronto—the carpenters, LiUNA, the established building trades across both the residential and institutional sectors—have you come across a union yet that hasn't talked about the labour shortage that's present, the one that's on the horizon, and the need for training programs? Is there any labour organization in the GTA that isn't talking about the building trades shortage?

**The Chair:** Please make your answer very brief.

**Mr. Peter Fonseca:** From conversations I've had, there isn't one. LiUNA, carpenters, painters, you name it—every organized labour group out there, which is unusual—are saying they need people. If they're saying that, and the contractors are saying the same thing, and the industry associations, I think we're all on the same page.

It's just a matter now of looking at maybe a model like the Atlantic one, which has worked well, and being able to implement this. It would start, of course, with the GTHA, where you'd be able to measure and look at how things are going and then do a rollout. I've heard from members that they would like to see it across the country.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid that will have to be the last word. We are out of time.

First of all, thank you, Mr. Fonseca. I also appreciate your mentioning the Portuguese. As you perfectly well know, they contributed greatly in building my riding. They are a huge component of my riding in Cambridge.

We will suspend briefly as we shift up the seats a bit and bring in both ESDC and Citizenship and Immigration.

Thank you.

● (1200)

(Pause)

● (1205)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everybody.

To continue today, we've been joined by department officials. First, from the Department of Employment and Social Development we have Elisha Ram, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch. Welcome.

We also have Stephen Johnson, Director General, Labour Market Information Directorate. Welcome, sir.

And we have Steven West, Director, Sector Policy Division. Welcome.

Also, from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, we have Natasha Kim, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy; and David Cashback, Director General, Immigration Branch.

Welcome to all of you. Each department will get 10 minutes for opening remarks. We'll start with ESDC.

Who is going to take the lead?

Mr. Ram, go ahead, it's all yours.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Elisha Ram (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development):** Good morning, everyone.

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the standing committee for inviting me to speak today.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are gathered here today on traditional, unceded Algonquin territory.

As the associate assistant deputy minister at Employment and Social Development Canada, I welcome the opportunity to participate in your study of the challenges facing the construction industry in the Greater Toronto Area and in Hamilton, in accessing skilled labour.

[*English*]

The study comes at a significant time for the Canadian labour market. As you've heard, unemployment is at an all-time low in many regions in the country. This has led many sectors, including the construction industry in the greater Toronto area and in Hamilton, as well as in other regions, such as northeastern Alberta and the Lower Mainland in British Columbia, to experience a variety of labour market challenges.

The Department of Employment and Social Development Canada has a wide array of programs and other supports available to address workforce shortages and other skills challenges and ensure the development of a strong and inclusive labour force. These resources support Canadian workers to gain the skills and experience they need to succeed, while also supporting employers who are seeking to access, develop and retain the labour force they require to grow their businesses.

One key area of skills development programming is apprenticeships. This is a proven model for transitioning workers into well-paying jobs in the skilled trades, including in the construction industry in the GTA and in Hamilton.

[*Translation*]

In recent years, the Department of Employment and Social Development has introduced several new apprenticeship programs to encourage Canadians to explore training and apprenticeship opportunities and to support innovation and training for the skilled trades.

[English]

As an example, ESDC supports union-based apprenticeship training innovation and enhanced partnerships in Red Seal trades through the union training and innovation program. The program provides funding to unions to share the cost of training equipment. The key component to the program is to support under-represented groups, with a goal of helping more Canadians to find rewarding and well-paying careers in the skilled trades.

As well, a new pre-apprenticeship program was introduced recently to encourage Canadians to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades. The program includes support for individuals from under-represented groups who are interested in attaining careers in the skilled trades. It can include young people, people from indigenous communities, new immigrants, women, and other under-represented groups.

Mr. Chair, a strong labour force depends on a job market where both men and women have a real and fair chance of success. Advancing gender equality and diversity in workplaces is not just good for women; it's good for all Canadians. While the share of women in the skilled trades has almost doubled over the past 40 years, there is more that can be done to close the gender gaps, and in turn help increase the supply of qualified labour, including in the trades.

The new women in construction fund supports projects building on existing models that have proven to be effective in attracting women to the trades. These models provide aid such as mentoring, coaching and tailored supports that help women progress through the training and find and retain jobs in the trades.

The quality of labour market opportunities for women is as important as the quantity. The apprenticeship incentive grant for women is a new grant that supports women to enter, progress and complete their training in Red Seal trades where women are traditionally under-represented and which are typically higher-paying.

[Translation]

Providing opportunities for workplace experience is an important part of our efforts, as work experience is critical to a successful transition for youth from school to work.

[English]

In addition to the programs designed to attract new workers, the Government of Canada provides a variety of supports to apprentices in the skilled trades along the way. Apprentices, for example, can receive grants and loans during a four-year apprenticeship program in Red Seal trades. They are eligible for various tax credits, and they can receive employment insurance benefits during the in-school training portion of the apprenticeship.

The Government of Canada recognizes also that employers are a crucial part of the equation. The apprenticeship job creation tax credit gives employers a credit for each apprentice they hire in eligible trades in the first two years of their apprenticeship programs.

Newcomers to Canada are another source of potential labour for the construction industry, and we are working with partners to facilitate the integration of skilled newcomers into the Canadian

labour market. For example, in the GTA, we work with organizations such as the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and the Centre for Education & Training. In collaboration with these stakeholders, we help simplify the foreign credential recognition process, provide direct service supports and micro-loans to cover the foreign credential recognition expenses of newcomers, and support them in gaining their first Canadian work experience.

I'd also like to say a few words about temporary workers, about whom we've already heard a little bit today. In situations where qualified Canadians and permanent residents are not available to fill jobs and labour shortages persist, the temporary foreign worker program is also available as a program of last resort to help employers, including in the construction sector, to address their genuine labour requirements.

• (1215)

[Translation]

Through this program, employers can seek to hire qualified foreign workers on a short-term basis when Canadians and permanent residents are not available.

[English]

Members of the committee may recall that as part of the government's response to the committee's 2016 report on the temporary foreign worker program, ESDC announced in April 2017 that it would work with industries that are heavy users of the temporary foreign worker program to review labour needs and identify appropriate workforce development strategies. One of the industries identified for this review was the construction industry.

In following up on the commitment, ESDC held a series of round tables with the construction sector in February and March of last year. Through these discussions, the participants identified several key challenges for the industry, including the recruitment of workers, the image of the industry, a lack of labour mobility, and the inability to share scheduling and planning of projects within the industry.

There are also opportunities for employers to enhance their efforts to recruit workers from traditionally under-represented groups, including women, indigenous people, youth and recent immigrants, among others. Many employers in the GTA and surrounding areas have been working to modernize their recruitment techniques to capture the attention of young people. They have also implemented sensitivity training to make their workplaces more attractive to women and other under-represented groups. This is a great start, but even more can be done and should be done. This is a win-win scenario. Employers will be able to access workers and grow their businesses, while more Canadians will gain well-paid jobs and experience that will serve them well in their working lives.

In addition to apprenticeships and temporary solutions, the department also works with parties, such as provinces, territories and industry, to make investment in skills training so that more Canadians are able to participate in the labour market. Each year, the government invests over \$2 billion through the labour market development agreements with the provinces and territories to support Canadians with skills training and employment support that is funded through employment insurance. Under these agreements, employment benefits enable eligible participants to gain skills and work experience. These agreements also support the provision of employment services assistance for all Canadians, which helps them in searching and preparing for jobs so that they can fulfill their potential.

The government has negotiated new workforce development agreements with most provinces and territories that enable them to provide employment assistance and skills training to respond to the diverse needs of their respective clients.

[Translation]

Having access to timely and accurate labour market information is another tool to help industries, including the construction sector in the Greater Toronto Area and in Hamilton, address labour shortages.

Through the sectorial initiatives program, Employment and Social Development Canada has supported sectoral organizations to produce industry-validated labour market information, including labour forecasts in the construction industry.

• (1220)

[English]

These forecasts help the construction industry identify the nature and scope of labour shortages. They consider factors such as the current labour supply and demand, the gender gap and population growth. This information has been used widely by employers, unions, sector organizations and various levels of government to help tailor programming and develop strategies.

In conclusion, ESDC is taking the labour issue in the construction industry very seriously and welcomes the study. Real change requires partnership between governments, businesses, unions, non-governmental organizations and civil society. There remains an opportunity for all of us to continue to work in partnerships to support Canadian industries and workers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear with you today. I and my colleagues will be pleased to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ram.

Next, I believe we have Natasha Kim, Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy.

The next 10 minutes are all yours.

[Translation]

**Ms. Natasha Kim (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for inviting IRCC to speak to the committee as part of the committee's study.

[English]

With an aging population that is contributing to more workers leaving the workforce every year than entering it, immigration will be a key source for population and labour force growth in the coming years. It will account for up to 80% of labour force growth by 2031.

At IRCC, we've certainly heard from many sectors about the challenges they're facing in terms of meeting the need for skilled labour to grow their businesses, improve exports and create more jobs. In addition to strategies for enhancing the participation of the domestic workforce, IRCC does recognize that new immigration will be an important component to meeting this need.

This is why the government's multi-year levels plan, which sets the number of permanent residents that Canada will accept every year, plans for year-over-year growth, with up to 350,000 new permanent resident admissions by 2021.

In addition to meeting Canada's commitments to family reunification and our humanitarian obligations, a key part of our levels plan is the emphasis it places on economic immigration. Nearly 60% of the 2019-21 multi-year levels plan is devoted to immigrants in the economic stream. The number of planned economic immigrants has grown almost 20% over the last three years.

Ontario, and in particular the GTA and the GTHA, receives the greatest share of permanent immigration overall, across all of these categories. In 2018, Toronto alone received over 106,000 new permanent residents, or about one third of all permanent resident admissions last year. Over 61,000—or about 60%—of these were permanent residents in the economic category. In addition to permanent residents, over 70,000 work permits were issued to migrant workers destined to Toronto in 2018 to work on a temporary basis.

Against that backdrop, I'd like to turn to an overview of some of our permanent economic immigration programs that may be of interest to this committee.

First, I understand the committee is interested in the Atlantic immigration pilot or, as we call it, AIP, and whether the lessons we're learning there could be applied to the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

The AIP was launched in 2017 and seeks to address particular demographic challenges that have been faced in the Atlantic region. This included the challenge of attracting and retaining immigrants to that region. Prior to the launch of the pilot, retention of immigrants in the Atlantic provinces was the lowest nationwide. It ranged from 16% to 68%, compared to the national average of 86% or the 91% retention rate in Ontario.

Therefore, a key focus of the pilot has been how to integrate newcomers early on in the process. This includes requiring every applicant to have, in addition to a job offer, an individualized settlement plan and the endorsement of their province. While the pilot is employer-driven, in the sense of employers being the ones to identify and recruit candidates who can permanently fill jobs in the region, employers are also required to play a stronger role in the settlement and integration of recruited workers and their families in the Atlantic region.

It's important to note that, in comparison, Ontario does not face the same challenges in attracting and retaining immigrants as the Atlantic region. As noted earlier, it receives the most new immigrants on a yearly basis, has a retention rate of over 90%, and also receives secondary migration from other provinces.

However, there are other existing economic immigration programs that can help respond to labour needs and may be of interest to the committee. In the brief time I have available, I'll talk about just two.

First, there are our federal express entry programs, which can meet the need for skilled workers in the construction industry at the national occupational code or NOC levels O, A and B. This includes construction managers and supervisors, carpenters, masonry workers and welders, as well as those in the electrical trades. Under our federal skilled trades program, we have targeted draws for skilled trade workers under express entry. Using express entry, we provide points. Points are given for job offers where they are available, as well as for Canadian work or study experience. That allows more temporary foreign workers who are already here to then transition to permanent residents.

The second program I'll highlight is the provincial nominee program, which allows provinces and territories to address labour market needs, such as those in construction, that are more regional than national in nature. While our federal programs often seek to balance needs across the country and in different parts of our economy, the provincial nominee program enables provinces and territories to develop their own streams that are more employer-driven in order to address needs in the in-demand sectors and occupations.

• (1225)

For example, in 2017, Ontario introduced an in-demand skills stream to allow workers with permanent job offers in high-demand occupations, including those in the construction sector, to become permanent residents. Ontario also has a skilled worker stream that is available to workers with at least one year of cumulative paid full-

time work experience in a skilled trade. This includes those in the industrial, electrical and construction trades, as well as in the maintenance and equipment operations trades.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I think it's important to note that unlike the temporary foreign worker program or temporary immigration, which are focused primarily on filling a certain job vacancy, permanent economic immigration does take a broader perspective. This means that, in addition to responding to labour market needs that may be present, we also look at indicators of an economic immigrant's ability to establish and adapt to a changing economy in the longer term. This often means looking at such attributes as language ability, education and work experience, and it often also includes their ability to have full-time year-long employment rather than seasonal work.

Those are some considerations that we take into account when we think about permanent economic immigration as opposed to filling job vacancies on a temporary basis.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there are any questions, we're happy to answer them.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Up first for questions is MP Barlow.

Go ahead, please.

**Mr. John Barlow:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the department's being here to address some of these issues. Certainly your comments have highlighted many of the things we have seen over the last several years. We've undervalued a lot of these trades or jobs that are actually viable careers, well-paying careers, and this is something that not only impacts the GTA but goes across Canada.

I was surprised by that number, that one third of immigrants end up in Toronto. Obviously, they haven't seen the other beautiful parts of the country where their chances of getting a good job are even better. We'll address attracting some of those people to rural constituencies at another time, but I was surprised by the scope of that number. That's substantial, for sure.

I have a quick question before I get into some of the other issues you brought up. I am just curious. I know that in 2013 or 2014, when we were in government, there was a study done at this committee, I believe, showing that more than half of Canadians who go through an apprenticeship program don't actually finish it, for various reasons. We did put in some programs, including the apprenticeship loan program. I think it was \$4,000 per term of study, and I know there are some other programs there as well.

Have some of those programs had an impact? I haven't seen updated numbers. Have they helped address some of the shortfall that we saw in Canadians finishing their apprenticeship programs?

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** It's true that the low rate of completion is an issue in apprenticeships. However, I think it's important to remember that completion, by itself, is not the only metric, or even the most important metric, when it comes to whether apprenticeship is a useful pathway to employment. When we talk to people about why they pursue apprenticeships and why they do or don't complete them, we hear about a variety of factors that affect those decisions. In many cases, people can find and keep good, well-paying careers even if they don't finish their apprenticeships.

What's important about the apprenticeship is that it serves as a pathway to get people into the trades. It provides them with both a skill and some work experience that they can rely on, but then it's important that they also make their own choices about exactly where they want to take it.

We have introduced a number of programs, including various financial and non-financial supports to help young Canadians through the apprenticeship process. Those include work we've been doing with the provinces and territories that have the policy lead for the skilled trades, and we have seen more Canadians actually progress all the way through their apprenticeships. I don't think the job is done on that, but at the same time I think it's also important that we simply help more Canadians see trades as a valid career and begin to pursue one even if ultimately they don't finish their apprenticeship.

•(1230)

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes, and maybe it's another resolution that we can have out of this committee, but I think one thing that we absolutely have to do is communicate with provincial governments to include trades in their education curriculum. I have a composite high school in my riding that's actually thinking of closing that portion of the high school, which is carpentry, welding.... I think that is absolutely the wrong direction to go in.

We have students who are academically very strong and who at a very young age say they want to go into welding, but the teachers say, "Oh, you're too smart for that." If they only knew that they were going to be making a six-figure salary when they're done, I think they would have a different perspective. If we want to change the perception of how these trades and careers can be valued, I think it starts at a different place from where we are here. I'm hoping that we can work at the provincial level with the school curriculum to bring these programs back to even the junior high level. I would say, before we even start talking about high school.

There's another question I wanted to ask. You talked about express entry, Ms. Kim. One thing with regard to express entry that is important... I think we all understand that we need to find a permanent solution to a permanent problem, and a temporary foreign worker isn't it. Nobody comes here for two years and then just wants to go home. They are coming here as a pathway to Canadian citizenship. One thing about express entry is that it ensures that when new Canadians or immigrants come to Canada, they know they have a job waiting for them. I think that is something we can't lose sight of. Whatever resolutions or recommendations come through this study, we need to ensure that when they come to Canada, they know they're going to have a job, wherever that may be in the country. I know we're focused on the GTA here.

Is it an option to simply, through the express entry program, take a look at the NOC codes and make some adjustments there in terms of the points system to maybe expand that a little to make it a bit easier? I don't want to have a program where we'll just allow immigrants to come to Canada and not have a job waiting for them or not have direction on where they can go. I think it's easier for them to get lost if they don't have a purpose and don't have something that they can plant roots in somewhere. I'm wondering if you can comment on the NOC codes portion of the express entry program.

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds, please.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I'm happy to. Express entry isn't actually NOC-based. It's not occupation-based. It balances different factors that have been shown to contribute to the longer-term success of economic immigrants. They include language ability, education and level of education, whether or not there's a sibling in Canada—there are extra points for that—work experience and then, of course, job offers. Depending on the type of job offer, there is a different number of points you can receive. This also actually manages a portion of the provincial nominee program. Provinces are able to use the express entry system to identify where there could be candidates who could fill particular job needs in those jurisdictions.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Long, please.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to all my colleagues.

Thanks to our witnesses for their very interesting presentations.

My riding is Saint John—Rothesay, in southern New Brunswick. It's a very industrial riding. We have some big industrial employers. Some of those employers are undertaking great initiatives with respect to apprenticeship and apprenticeship training, in particular initiatives for women in that training.

With respect to post-secondary education, I think our government has come forth and provided a range of supports specifically for apprentices, including those through the apprenticeship completion grant, the apprenticeship incentive grant for women, and further initiatives announced in budget 2018.

Can you speak to me, please, about the impact of these supports on apprenticeship completion rates, Mr. Ram? What impact are you seeing?

•(1235)

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** As noted earlier, apprenticeship completion is important. We do want to see more Canadians enter and complete their apprenticeships. I know that it is the same goal for provinces, territories and many employers as well.



At the same time, an apprenticeship is a journey. It's going to be a little different for every individual, and there may be a very valid reason why someone may not complete their apprenticeship.

Anecdotally, many people tell us that they can get a very good job after two or three years in an apprenticeship program. They don't feel that they need to go all the way to completion. The value of completing an apprenticeship, particularly in the Red Seal trades, is that it makes you much more mobile. Through the work we've been doing with the provinces and territories, we know that if you have completed your apprenticeship and have become a journeyperson in a Red Seal trade, you can pretty much take that qualification anywhere in Canada. That makes you more mobile. That potential allows you to be more resilient to economic changes and pursue opportunities not just in your home province or your home region.

We would like to see more Canadians have those opportunities. I think we've shown that the availability of financial and non-financial support is an important consideration for apprentices, and more of them do complete. However, there are equally important factors, including the work environment, the availability of other economic opportunities and family circumstances as well.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** I would agree with Mr. Barlow, my friend and colleague across the way, that there are wonderful job opportunities, wonderful long-lasting career job opportunities, for people who get into the trades, in particular for women. As I said, in my riding the lack of women entering over the last 10 years, let's say, is staggering.

Has the department conducted any evaluations or obtained any more data that it could share with us with respect to women in trades, such as whether it's increasing or not? Do you have any data, or is the department doing anything on that?

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** Obviously, that's an area in which we've been doing a lot of work. We would like to see more women enter and stay in the trades.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** But do you have anything that shows, for instance, that in 2006 there was this and in 2016 there was that? Are you seeing trends?

Can you elaborate on that, Mr. Johnson?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson (Director General, Labour Market Information Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development):** I can't necessarily speak to the trends, but certainly we can get back to the committee on this. I have some notes here saying that in Toronto and Hamilton, the share of women in construction was about 14.5%, which was higher than for Ontario as a whole.

So we have some of those statistics.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** But you don't have anything to compare it with where it was five years previous.

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** This is just a point in time. There would be other data points.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** What point in time is that?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** This one here is for 2018.

The BuildForce organization reports, which the department provides funding to through the sectoral initiatives program, would also include some of the breakdown in the information that they

have. They update those. There is information at different frequencies and different levels, at either the provincial level or the sub-provincial level, that would give you a notion of the trends and improvements. We've seen improvements globally, but it's still significantly short of the approximately 50% of the labour force that women make up.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you very much.

There's one thing I want to get on the record, too, in response to Mr. Barlow's earlier comments on temporary foreign workers. Increased funds for inspections and integrity were the result of recommendations from the Auditor General's report. That's number one. We know that inspections and integrity measures, with the greatest respect, weren't present under the previous Conservative government. We saw scenarios like the HD Mining fiasco—

**Mr. John Barlow:** Yes, they were, Wayne—

**The Chair:** Hold on. No interruptions.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** —that saw a B.C. mining company approved to bring in 450 foreign miners, and speaking Mandarin was a condition of employment. RBC brought in 400 temporary workers to train offshore employees. Integrity is vital with the program so that Canadians have trust and confidence in it.

Ms. Kim, can you elaborate on the changes in what we have done to ensure that Canadians have faith in the temporary foreign worker program?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid he has not left you very much time—about 20 or 30 seconds, please.

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** Maybe I can take that question.

Absolutely, inspection and integrity are important parts of the TFW program. We're trying to balance a variety of different considerations. Yes, we want employers to have access to labour, but we have to make sure that Canadians are not being disadvantaged as a consequence and that the people we are bringing over receive the same treatment and the same good working conditions that Canadians do. Integrity is a key piece of that.

● (1240)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** MP Duvall, please.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Thank you.

Thank you, everybody, for coming today and sharing your information.

Ms. Kim, in your report you mentioned the Atlantic immigration pilot. Has there been an evaluation of the pilot program? What have been the successes? Have there been failures? I'm just wondering if there is a report from it that we can learn from going into Toronto.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** The pilot was only fully launched in March 2017. Of course, it took some time for admissions to actually follow, because there was a process in place. Provinces had to designate employers in order for them to actually participate under the pilot. Then, those who were recruited had to not only receive a job offer but also work with a settlement agency to get an individualized settlement plan and then get the endorsement of the province. Only after those steps were completed could someone submit their permanent resident application to IRCC. It took some time. Of course, then they had to actually move to Canada with their families.

We're seeing now very good results in terms of the numbers, and they've been steadily increasing. To date, I believe we have over 1,000 permanent resident admissions. Those are people who have actually landed in the Atlantic region, although we already have people working there under the pilot through a bridging mechanism on a temporary basis. I would just say that the numbers have been increasing, but it's a bit early right now to have done an evaluation of the pilot. We are looking to do that in the near term, but we needed to see some of those numbers increase before we could do a good assessment.

That said, I would just say that we are in fairly regular contact with our provincial counterparts in the Atlantic, as well as employers in the region and settlement agencies, just to keep tabs on how things are going. Generally, the reviews have been quite positive. There have been some very valuable and useful stories. We have learned various lessons so far, such as the importance of that relationship to the overall Atlantic growth strategy as an economic development strategy. As well, the partnership with ACOA on the ground has been very valuable as we've been implementing this. Those are the types of lessons we continue to collect.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** On that same subject, are any of them allowed to move to other parts of the country, being that this pilot program is for eastern Canada?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Absolutely. As permanent residents, they have the mobility rights that all permanent residents have under the charter. They are free to move, but what the pilot is trying to test is whether those greater settlement supports early on and the enhanced role by the employer in trying to integrate people into the community will promote greater retention in the region. It's not a requirement, but it's a way in which we're trying to influence that.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Thank you.

Mr. Ram, in your report on the round table discussions, you were saying that there's a lack of labour mobility, as people discussed. What I've seen in some of the reports is that in the construction industry you're going to have peaks and valleys. It could be in one part of Canada or it could be in another section of Canada, but there are a lot of skilled workers out there.

As for why it's booming in the Toronto area, there's greater demand, while in Sudbury, for instance, there might not be so much building going on. There's no incentive for a worker in Sudbury, say, to use those skills and come to Toronto for a month and a half or two months, because he has to pay for a place to stay and his food. Whatever money he's making, he's basically paying half of that to put his employment in Toronto, while he has a mortgage back in Sudbury.

Why is there no incentive program for people to move? Otherwise, they're just better off to stay at home if they're going to lose half their wages. They might as well just sit there and have EI and do something else.

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** That's a very interesting question. I think we need to think about the appropriate balance in this in terms of the role of the government in facilitating an open, transparent, flexible labour market. One of the responsibilities is in terms of employers offering competitive wages and working conditions and helping to attract and retain people, and another is the responsibility of individual employees and workers in terms of how they pursue the path that's right for them.

I think it would be relatively complex to design a system that would provide incentives without effectively displacing the role that some of the other actors need to play in the system. It's not something that couldn't be considered, but it would have to be very carefully designed in order to avoid creating a very expensive program that effectively pays people to do what they would have done otherwise.

• (1245)

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Do you believe that there should be a tax incentive, something that the person can write off in using his skills to go from one area to another?

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** There is already a tax recognition for moving expenses. That's available to people to earn employment. That's already in place. I think one can look at the possibility of other types of incentives. They don't have to be financial. A lot of the work we have been doing with sectors and companies is around creating the right conditions and making sure that people know what job opportunities are available to them. My colleague Mr. Johnson can speak to that. I think we have to think beyond simply the financial incentive and look at the system as a whole.

**Mr. Scott Duvall:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** MP Morrissey.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Ram, you outlined an impressive array of support programs to incentivize people into the various trades, yet today we're sitting here with what's been identified as a significant gap in recruiting. Is it fair, then, for this committee to say, or would you agree, that immigration is going to have to play a continued vital role in meeting the various labour components of the construction industry, both residential and commercial, going forward?

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** I'll allow my colleague to speak to the immigration side of it. From our perspective, addressing labour needs of the economy as a whole, including in construction in the GTA, as well as across the country, will require a multi-faceted approach. It's not going to be one tool and a single approach that's going to get us there.

I think we need to make sure that the right skills are in place. We need to make sure that we're working with the industry and with the provinces to train the people. There needs to be the ability for employers to identify the skills they need and connect those to the people who are being trained throughout the system. Mobility is certainly an important issue in terms of making sure that people have the capacity to move, and then of course there's the potential contribution of immigration.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Okay.

I will get to immigration. I want to go back, because your section is responsible—to use your terms—for providing timely data. If I went back and asked you what your section was advising the government 10 years ago with regard to where the skill shortages would be in this key construction component, could you answer that for the committee? It's your responsibility to have timely data to advise on an array of programs, so 10 years ago, or even five years ago, what skills would you have been identifying?

When I look at the data from BuildForce, they list particular skills. It didn't happen overnight, so what were you advising the government 10 years ago or five years ago?

**Mr. Stephen Johnson:** I think it's important to say that we have a variety of sources of labour market information. We receive some through surveys from Statistics Canada. We look at our own administrative data, including things like employment insurance data and Job Bank data, and then the BuildForce industry validates it. As I mentioned earlier, the department actually funds that organization and a few others to undertake what we see as valuable information that adds to the information base we have.

I can tell you it's been a long time. I've been in the department for 17 or 18 years, and I think since the first day I arrived, there has been conversation around apprenticeship and skilled trades and why it seems that so many youth don't consider those to be viable first-choice careers.

That notion, I think, has been long-standing.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** This is not the first time we've heard this. As Mr. Barlow pointed out, I had a composite high school as well. They're closing them down because the young people aren't going, so we'll acknowledge that particular part within Canada.

I have a specific question, and then I'll go to the immigration question.

How many of the trades that have been identified in the BuildForce shortage—when you look at this alarming shortage coming in sections—have been identified or have been approved under the express entry stream in the GTA?

•(1250)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Mr. Chair, unfortunately I don't have the BuildForce report in front of me and—

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Well, then, just allude to general construction—bricklayers, plumbers, carpentry framers, roofers—all the items that were identified by the mover of this motion. How many of those have been approved under the express entry?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** NOC B occupations—those are skilled trades—are all eligible under express entry.

Based on the data I have here, about 3,200 immigrants with skilled trades background have been admitted over the last four years through express entry. About one third of those settled in Ontario, but 86% of those were headed to the Toronto area.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Did I hear you correctly? Did you identify what particular skill they identified?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Those would be under NOC B, which includes things like carpenters, masons, roofers, electrical tradespeople, welders—interestingly, at different skill levels. So, for example, in the construction trades and helpers, which I think the previous witness talked about, we actually find that a lot of immigrants from other categories—so, actually not economic immigrants but, say, people who entered as refugees or part of the family class—will end up as part of the domestic workforce, working in those occupations.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Seated before the committee today is extensive expertise within two divisions of government, and some have been here for some time. We do know—and this was pointed out—that it does not appear that we are lacking incentives or funding for various trade programs, whether by demographic or whatever, yet, according to the documentation, we're seeing a growing critical labour shortage in particular fields right across the country, specifically in some areas.

We have immigration. What is it that the government has to move to blend the pool? It's pretty clear—and I would be curious to see what the statistics were 10 years ago—that we have a shrinking pool within our domestic market as it relates to young people entering the trades or being retrained in the trades.

What is the component that we need from immigration that would solve this problem? It is a drag on the economy. It's probably in the billions of dollars in lost opportunities and those sorts of things.

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I guess I would say that it's something that's not isolated to the greater Toronto and Hamilton area in the construction trades—

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** I know that, but I'm looking to—

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Nationally, demographically that's a challenge we're facing, and that's why immigration definitely will play a role going forward as a—

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** What do we have to change in the stream that's not working?

**The Chair:** Sorry, Bobby, I have to cut you off there. We have to be fair with time. Maybe Dan will give you some time, maybe not.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** Go ahead and finish your question.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Is there something you could recommend to the committee that we should be looking at changing within the immigration field?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We'll be interested to see the committee's recommendation in terms of broader outlooks. For example, we don't see that there is a projected shortage nationally when it comes to construction. We certainly are constantly looking at our programs to see how we can better adapt or respond to labour market requirements in Canada.

For example, the minister recently announced a rural and northern pilot that we'll be launching for rural and northern Canada, where we'll be looking to partner with communities to try to spread the benefits of immigration to those areas. Like the Atlantic region, it's about trying to use immigration as a tool where there have been challenges in attracting and retaining immigrants to build the workforces. There are different ways we are looking at to be responsive to the labour market needs in Canada, but of course they're varied based on where you live and what industry you're in. It's something that we're constantly trying to improve.

**Mr. Dan Ruimy:** I'm going to share my time with PS Cuzner, but before I do, I want to make another comment. I believe the pathway to citizenship is critically important, but on the other side, we have a lot of youth out there who are struggling and need the opportunities, at-risk youth, and this is perfect to get them into this line of work. I think we have to continuously look at how our employment programs are best suited to do that. Those are questions that will continue popping up.

It's over to you, Rodger.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** You have four minutes. I'll have to stop you right at four, I'm afraid.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Okay.

Thanks, all, for being here today.

Obviously, to my colleagues around the table here, this is a very complex issue and one-size-fits-all does not accommodate. We know that. Taking the sentiment from my friend Mr. Barlow, many who come here do want to become Canadian citizens, but there are temporary foreign workers. Leonardo DiCaprio—and I know you're a big Leonardo fan—

**Mr. John Barlow:** How dare you bring that up?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** When he comes here to work on a movie, he's a temporary foreign worker. There are different needs. Different parts of the country have different needs, and different sectors have different needs.

As Mr. Ram indicated—and it's been indicated before in some of the testimony—for many of those jobs, they've used the temporary foreign worker program in the absence of a real program that suits their needs.

You made reference to the rural pilot project. We know that agri-food needs a pilot project. You can go to Neepawa or Brandon and to any of those meat plants—those aren't temporary jobs. They are looking for permanent residents to come there. When you get somebody working in a position that is unionized, they have health and safety benefits, and you know that they're working under a collective agreement so they have guaranteed wages. Also, the union

works with management to help with their English skills. Those are all beneficial. They want to become Canadians. If there's a best practice, those companies have experienced the best practice.

Specific to the GTA and the study we're undergoing here today, are there caps on the numbers of skilled trades that we can recognize, that we can process? Nationally, are there caps on the express entry?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I wouldn't call them caps. As mentioned, the levels plan is the government's plan for permanent resident admissions every year. It breaks that down by category, including what comes under our federal high-skills program. I believe it's about 80,000 this year, so they're not small numbers. The provincial nominee program is one where there is often a more direct linkage to specific regional labour market needs that can be responded to, and that program has been growing faster than any other program that we've seen in our levels plan. This year, it's going to be 61,000.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** That's 61,000?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That's right. That includes family members as well. There are no caps per se, but there are planned admissions for permanent immigration.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** I'm just wondering what the difference might be between planned limits and caps, but....

The lack of mobility was also brought up. Mr. Duvall talked about mobility provisions. Are you comfortable commenting on some incentives to make sure Canadians get first crack at the jobs? We want to make sure we don't suppress Canadian wages. We want to make sure that the people who come in are looked after as far as health and safety goes.

Do you see a benefit in looking at mobility? When you see 1,000 electricians out of work in Alberta, can you see some benefit in looking at provisions not for relocation but just for travel, for those intermittent times of three, six or eight weeks' work? Can you see something with some benefit for those opportunities, mobility as well as accommodation?

**The Chair:** Please make it a very brief answer.

**Mr. Elisha Ram:** As I said, I think that's an interesting area of inquiry. It comes up in a number of different conversations. The government certainly has an interest in making sure that Canadians, wherever they are, have access to good jobs. It doesn't serve anybody's interest, as you pointed out, to have unemployed people in one part of the country and unfilled jobs in another part. Incentives could be part of the conversation, but there's an equally important part of the conversation: How do we facilitate the linkages? How do we help workers know about the opportunities? How do we help employers know where they might be able to find the labour they are looking for? Those are the things we are studying very intently.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

MP Diotte, you have time for a very brief question.

**Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC):** We've heard that Toronto gets 106,000 new permanent residents, or they did in 2018, and obviously there are shortages of workers there. How much effort is going into attracting immigrants to Canada with the trades that Canada direly needs? How much more could be done in that regard?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Overall, I'd say that Canada often doesn't have an attraction problem when it comes to immigration. There is often much more demand to come here than there is supply. Under our levels plan, we do try to manage the amount of immigration Canada takes in every year, but often the number of people interested in coming here is much higher, so of course we have that dynamic.

When it comes to skilled trades in particular, we support what the market is looking for. If employers have jobs available and have recruited someone, they can use the open pathways we have, both federally and provincially, to—

**Mr. Kerry Diotte:** Right now, of those 106,000 new permanent residents, how many are working?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I'd have to see; I think Statistics Canada released something in December that showed there were very high levels of employment.

**Mr. Kerry Diotte:** Will you follow up on that with me?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I can follow up, yes.

**The Chair:** Excellent. Thank you very much, sir.

I'm afraid that brings us to the top of the hour and the end of today's meeting.

I want to thank all of you for being here today. I look forward to continuing this study on Thursday, also in this space, when we have our first set of witnesses.

Again, thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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