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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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Chair: Julie Dzerowicz





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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 15 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. A number of people, including Ms. Zahid, one of our committee members, will be joining us on Zoom.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and the members. For those on Zoom, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Kindly mute yourself when you are not speaking. At the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. For those in the room, we would encourage you to use your earpiece and select the desired channel, whether it's English or French.

In terms of making sure that everyone stays on time, I will let you know when you have one minute left. I will then let you know when your time is up and your microphone is shut off.

Kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. I will remind everyone to please not speak over each other, as that makes it difficult for our translators. Please make sure that all your comments are addressed through the chair. If you would like to speak, please raise your hand. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

[Translation]

I would also like to welcome Mr. Mario Simard, who is replacing a member of the committee today.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on September 16, 2025, the committee is resuming its study of Canada's immigration system.

I would like to welcome the witnesses for our first panel at today's meeting. As an individual, we have Margareta Dovgal, a public policy analyst. We have Allan Ralph Basa, caregivers policy reform advocate and founder, Canadian Caregivers Assistance Organization. From Toronto Global, online via Zoom, we have Daniel Hengeveld, vice-president, investment attraction.

Welcome to all of you. You will each have five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed with rounds of questions.

We will go to Ms. Dovgal first for five minutes.

**Margareta Dovgal (Public Policy Analyst, As an Individual):** Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and committee members. It's a pleasure to be here.

While I am equipped to offer a perspective on Canada's immigration system as an employer and a policy analyst in natural resources, there are many such perspectives out there. They can speak to the importance of getting immigration right for Canada's economy. Today I want to speak to this issue as an individual and as someone who thinks deeply about these issues so that I can address the cultural and social dimensions that must be considered in the design and implementation of Canada's immigration policies.

The success of Canada's immigration system must be defined by the needs and demands of Canadians. It must be ethical and fair to those seeking to come to Canada for a better life, whether for a short stay or for the rest of their lives. Most crucially, it must be conducive to a high-trust social fabric and cohesive national identity.

Perfect unity is not likely in a diverse, pluralistic society, but we can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Immigration is about more than just the composition of a fraction of our labour market. In an era of birth rates far below the natural replacement rate—right now we're at 1.25 per woman—the choices of who we attract and how we admit them are essentially creating our future social and demographic composition. There is no value-neutral approach here. Anything that espouses such a thing is conceding to the values of whoever most effectively moves through the system.

The value-neutral approach has failed at cultivating public trust, ensuring administrative fairness for newcomers and advancing a culturally informed view of population growth. It has also empowered those who don't respect Canadian laws or values to behave with impunity, exploiting our immigration process in the system. According to polling conducted by Abacus last month, a plurality of Canadians, 49%, view immigration somewhat or very negatively. Only a quarter view it positively. Other surveys point to a more negative view by those who have immigrated in decades past.

I imagine that you have heard considerable evidence through this study, if not prior to it, that immigration programs have been gamified. The rampant side-door stream that emerged in recent years via post-secondary institutions is one such example. Living in Vancouver, many of my friends—

[Translation]

**Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Chair, I have a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt the witness, but I hope my friend the interpreter can make it to the end of the meeting. I think she is going to run out of air if our friends the witnesses do not slow down.

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair:** It is true. Ms. Dovgal, you're speaking very quickly. Just for our translators, I'll need you to slow down a little bit. Thank you.

**Margareta Dovgal:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

Reunification is taking place, and it's having an unfair impact on Canadians and also on immigrants who are newcomers. Those who are law-abiding immigrants are being encouraged to consider all sorts of unethical schemes like fake jobs, dodgy refugee claims and fictional marriages to stay in the country, all under the guise of... Well, many others are doing this too.

Non-immigrant Canadians are not naive, and they see this happening as well, further contributing to declining trust in immigration.

I support the principles that MP Rempel Garner intends to advance in amendments to Bill C-12, particularly efforts to ensure that criminals are held accountable for crimes, which is a crucial aspect of ensuring system functionality, but I would consider the broader questions here too.

In lieu of more stats or facts, which I'm sure this committee has heard of a lot, I have a little story to tell.

In 2017, I was moving from Ottawa to Vancouver. My moving truck with most of my household belongings was stolen in the greater Toronto area. Unlike many of these cases, my belongings were recovered in the Brampton area. I got back my family photos and my mother's ashes; not all victims of crime are this lucky.

There's a reason I share this story. Charges were laid by Peel police for multiple crimes related to the theft, including cheque fraud and possession of stolen property. There was a ring of perpetrators, most of whom police told me were foreign nationals. One guy was apparently deported for other offences before the trial date. Another one was at large and of no fixed address when I last heard from the police, who informed me that they would be seeking deportation for him as well, if he ever resurfaced. Police informed me at the time that this was relatively common and that, in fact, Canada is a ripe target for transnational criminals accused of crimes ranging from petty crime to drug, arms and human trafficking.

On top of this, I add to this the reality that we are also doing nothing to avoid the import of sectarian tensions, and it is clear that

the value-neutral approach to immigration is no longer serving Canadians.

My own run-in shattered my sense of security and my trust that Canada is a relatively safe place. The reality is that as a country—

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Margareta Dovgal:** —we've chosen to...I'm sorry; was my time removed?

**The Chair:** You have one minute left, and then, if you don't finish, don't worry. There are going to be questions, and you'll have a chance to finish that.

**Margareta Dovgal:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

Essentially, we've chosen to advance a naive, idealistic view of immigration that assumes that all newcomers are boy scouts, that any systems failures are merely coordination or resourcing issues, and that everyone comes here as a blank slate with exactly the neutral views on everyone else in the country that our own immigration system seems to hold about newcomers themselves.

Under public pressure, the federal government is looking seriously at immigration numbers and pathways. That's important work. I encourage this committee to also seriously consider whether the current program design promotes public safety and societal cohesion and, if not, what can be done to improve it.

I look forward to your questions, and I thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Ms. Dovgal.

Next we will turn to Mr. Basa for five minutes.

**Allan Ralph Basa (Caregivers Policy Reform Advocate and Founder, Canadian Caregivers Assistance Organization):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the honour and privilege to be part of this very important discussion, especially to MP Salma Zahid, who has been helping us for very long years.

As a witness in this august body, I will focus on the topic of immigration levels, though I believe it is impossible to speak meaningfully about levels without also considering the immigration process. These two are inseparable, and addressing them together will strengthen the position I put forward today.

One of the most prominent changes in the 2025-27 immigration levels plan is a reduction in overall immigration targets. The hashtag "in-Canada focus" highlights the government's intent to prioritize immigrants already working in Canada under temporary permits, offering them a clearer pathway to permanent residency, but this raises a critical question: Should we be lowering immigration levels, or should we be fixing the system itself?

Let me illustrate this with the case of caregiving.

Caregivers play a unique and essential role in Canadian society, yet under the home care worker immigration pilot, the cap is set at just 2,750 applications each for child care and home support.

As of September 2025, there were 34,000 applications across all caregiver programs. From January to December, IRCC processed only 4,200 applications. With a processing rate of only 14%, they will manage to process just another 4,816 applications this year. Meanwhile, the cap for the home care worker immigration pilot remains at 5,500 applications in total.

With such limited processing capacity, thousands of in-Canada caregivers' applications will remain in limbo. This plan negatively impacts caregivers not only because of the low cap but also because Canada's need for caregivers continues to grow. Restrictive immigration levels and slow processing exacerbate existing problems.

Many caregivers are forced to remain with abusive employers, enduring exploitation simply because their status is tied to their job. The backlog is massive and the narrow window of opportunity worsens the situation.

Caregivers are not just workers. They are the backbone of Canada's social support system, saving the government billions in social services. They enable families to thrive, allow parents to fully participate in the workplace and ensure seniors live with dignity. Their contributions strengthen both Canada's economy and its social fabric.

I submit to you that the immigration limit and caregiver cap are far too low, and I say this for several reasons.

One is the human impact. Caregivers endure years of family separation, exploitation and abuse because of limited chances for permanent residency.

Another reason is labour market needs. Canada faces a persistent shortage. Many caregivers are skilled professionals whose education and expertise could benefit our economy if given a chance to transition to permanent residency.

A third reason is policy alignment. Increasing immigration levels for caregivers is aligned with the government's stated priority of transitioning competent temporary foreign workers already in Canada to permanent residency.

Fourth is the fact that there are systemic challenges. The low cap creates a bottleneck. Caregivers lose status and face financial hardship, and employers are burdened with costly LMIA requirements.

Processing delays make permanent residency feel like passing through the eye of a needle. It is noteworthy that Canada's 2025 immigration plan emphasizes two key features: an in-Canada focus and family reunification.

- (1540)

If there is one group of workers who deserve fair allocation under these priorities, it is the caregivers, those who have been in Canada the longest and have contributed immensely to our society and economy yet remain hostage to an elusive dream of permanent residency.

Their prolonged family separation undermines the very pillar of our immigration system: family reunification. As the legal dictums remind us, justice delayed is justice denied.

Colleagues, by increasing immigration levels for caregivers and improving operational capacity and processing times, we can move towards an immigration system that is not only fair and humane but also effective in meeting Canada's labour and development needs.

It is not just about numbers. It is about people, it is about fairness and it is about building a Canada that truly values the contributions of those who care for our children, our elderly and our most vulnerable.

I therefore respectfully urge your reconsideration of the tightened immigration levels. Canada cannot afford to lose these talents and skills, especially in the face of the constant economic and trade challenges it faces. On the contrary, we need a strong and reliable labour force. By supporting caregivers, we secure not only our labour market but also the very strength of our economy and society.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Basa.

Finally, we'll go to Mr. Hengeveld for five minutes.

**Daniel Hengeveld (Vice President, Investment Attraction, Toronto Global):** Thank you, Madam Chair, Vice-Chairs and honourable members. It's a privilege to appear before you today.

My remarks focus on one part of Canada's immigration system: the business immigration pathways that allow skilled workers, founders and senior leaders to build companies and create jobs here.

Toronto Global is the foreign direct investment agency for the greater Toronto area, Canada's business and financial capital, which generates nearly 20% of the nation's GDP. We're a non-profit organization funded by all three orders of government, and our mission is to attract international companies to establish and grow operations here. When they do, they create good jobs, diversify our markets and increase prosperity.

We help companies expand into the GTA by pitching the region and advising on sites, data, regulations and partners, often in direct competition with other jurisdictions globally. We do not offer cash incentives as part of our work. When a company chooses the Toronto region, it's rarely because we outspend competitors, but instead because we have presented a strong value proposition about the fundamental advantages of the greater Toronto area and Canada at large. They come for our talent and for the confidence that their people can build stable lives here. Immigration policy can be a key competitive advantage that encourages companies to choose Canada.

Since our inception, Toronto Global has helped more than 320 companies land in the Toronto region, creating over 37,000 jobs in sectors like advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean technology and AI. They depend on Canadian workers and on business immigration programs that let firms bring in the specialized international talent needed to get operations off the ground.

Each week, our team speaks with global firms that are comparing Canada with jurisdictions that move senior people quickly and offer clear pathways from temporary to permanent status. Increasingly, these companies are raising concerns and asking us to convey them to policy-makers. I'm here today primarily as a messenger for those clients.

We are hearing three recurring themes.

First, companies worry about predictability at key transition points: work permit renewals, changes of status from intra-company transferee to permanent resident and the final steps to citizenship. Companies understand that security and integrity checks are essential. What they find difficult is the uncertainty of files remaining in extended review with no clear timeline or communication. This makes it hard for senior leaders to plan the next phase of growth for their Canadian operation.

In addition, for those who have moved their family here, they feel that they are left in the dark about things like schooling and housing. For a person who is responsible for a Canadian team, that uncertainty becomes both a business risk and a personal strain.

Second, our clients highlight the experience of workers who are already here in permanent roles, paying taxes and building their lives in our communities. Many tell us that sustaining these workers should be at least as high a priority as bringing in new ones. They see strong economic logic in creating a clearer pathway from temporary status to permanent residence for people who have already shown their commitment to Canada through stable employment, qualifying salaries, in-demand skills, police checks and tax records.

Third, the current points-based selection system, which quite reasonably favours younger applicants, can have unintended consequences for senior talent. Founders, C-suite leaders and highly experienced specialists in their late forties and fifties may find it surprisingly difficult to qualify for permanent residency, even when they are leading major investments. For firms deciding where to locate head offices or global mandates, the ability to secure a long-term future in Canada for this tier of leadership is often decisive.

Some clients have suggested relatively targeted improvements. These include clearer communication when applications move into complex security or background checks, service standards that are realistic, and respected and dedicated tools or streams for senior leaders whose roles are central to major investments—

• (1545)

**The Chair:** One minute.

**Daniel Hengeveld:**—while maintaining rigorous vetting.

I want to emphasize that, even with these concerns, Canada and the greater Toronto area remain highly attractive for our clients. They value our stability, our institutions, universities and communities. Their message is not that the system is broken, but that improving predictability and transparency in business immigration pathways would strengthen one of Canada's core advantages in the highly competitive global market for capital and talent.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these perspectives. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hengeveld.

That was just under five minutes. Thank you very much.

We're now going to begin the first round of questions. Just so our witnesses know, it's for a total of six minutes. I ask you to try to be as brief as you can and to not speak too fast.

For my colleagues, try to be pointed with your questions as well.

For six minutes, we have Mr. Redekopp.

**Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Dovgal, I read your article here on our national culture.

Under this current Liberal government, we've seen record-breaking levels of immigration and not a lot of planning going into things like housing, infrastructure or integration, for that matter. In your view, has this mass immigration approach, without a cohesive framework, contributed to the social and economic breakdowns that we're seeing in our country?

**Margareta Dovgal:** Evidence is absolutely clear that we have seen this “robbing Peter to pay Paul” phenomenon taking place, where we’ve been seeing some of the advantages economically and in terms of the demographic sustainability that we’ve been getting from immigration, at least on paper, and then in reality we’ve been seeing lots of the pressures.

I also do a lot of housing advocacy. In cities like Vancouver, rental rates are incredibly unaffordable. We see direct ties with in-bound immigration numbers, and the price increases we see year over year—

**The Chair:** Ms. Dovgal, I’m just going to stop your time for a second.

Please speak clearly, and go a little bit slower. Just get closer to the microphone. Thank you.

• (1550)

**Margareta Dovgal:** I’m sorry. Thanks so much.

I think there’s a phenomenon that you’re describing, and it’s contributing to cultural breakdown. I think lots of young Canadians in my generation are profoundly stressed and anxious about their futures. It’s because we have chosen to fix one problem, which is our collapsing demographics, without doing the deep, necessary and difficult work of ensuring that the infrastructure is there to support all of the people coming into the country.

**Brad Redekopp:** Do you see people lacking jobs? Maybe we haven’t put the effort into getting those people working in some jobs. Do we sometimes bring in immigrants in cases where we shouldn’t?

**Margareta Dovgal:** Yes. I think there are lots of things going on. One of those is competition that comes from immigration. I think it’s fair to say that there are definitely examples where we don’t have Canadian workers who can do certain jobs, or Canadian workers don’t want to do certain jobs, whether they be highly skilled or service jobs. Immigration is a solution for some of those things.

I think we’ve been working a little bit too intensely to increase those numbers uncritically. The result is lots of those pressures are being felt by Canadians. That’s why we’ve seen such abysmally low support for immigration coming out in the last couple of years by the public.

**Brad Redekopp:** Conservatives have called for immigration levels to be tied to things like our ability to house people, available jobs, health care and those kinds of things, rather than some random numbers pulled out of the air or driven by someone else. Would you support this kind of pragmatic immigration policy to prioritize integration over ideology?

**Margareta Dovgal:** Yes, I would support the idea of pragmatic immigration policies, absolutely.

I think my argument as well has been that we need to not just do it purely with a focus on the economy. If we do that, we’re giving up to the system dynamics. Those dynamics aren’t creating the types of outcomes that we want in terms of the composition and the high trust that I think Canadians expect from our society. It’s one of the reasons immigrants like my parents came to this country and

have been coming here for decades, because they want to be safe. They want to have a place where they can respect each other and live in a pluralistic society. I think we failed not only on some of the economic components of immigration recently but also on the cultural components.

**Brad Redekopp:** Tell me a little bit more about the cultural side, then. What sorts of things would you like to see be different to help us to maintain and improve the cultural side that you’re speaking about?

**Margareta Dovgal:** I think the piece that you were referring to earlier speaks to the broader kind of approach that we take to Canada’s identity. It’s beyond the scope of this committee, for sure.

We need to define what it is to be Canadian, and we are in a sense postnational. Many of the people who live in this country come from different places, speak different languages and have different ethnic backgrounds. That is the strength of Canada.

We can’t do it in a vacuum where the focus is on looking with shame and some degree of disgust on how we got here and how this country was founded, if we want to present any kind of unified front on who we are. Lots of immigrants I speak to, who are coming here now, don’t see anything to being Canadian beyond just civic values. To them that’s not a particularly strong or compelling case. I think that’s a difficult but necessary one, broadly.

As it relates to immigration specifically, I really like the general frame of going after people who are outright disrespecting the compact that comes with immigration. They’re not obeying the law. They’re launching fake claims to try to get into the system. I think those are basic principles-based things that we can do to ensure that the immigration system itself has integrity and reflects the values that Canadians expect it to have.

**Brad Redekopp:** To paraphrase what you just said, you’re saying that we should be strict with our rules. If you break the rules, if you break our laws, if you don’t follow the cultural norms that we have in terms of legal laws, then you should not be considered to stay in the country. Is that what you’re saying?

**Margareta Dovgal:** That’s right. Clear, transparently applied rules are critical. Likewise, it is pretty important that it’s not rules in a vacuum.

**Brad Redekopp:** In terms of this cultural piece, you referred to our previous prime minister Trudeau, who said that we’re in this postnational world. You used that word, but you said it could still have value and meaning.

How important is that to maintain in order for newcomers to integrate into what we call Canada?

**Margareta Dovgal:** I think postnationalism is a reality, but it is not an objective goal, nor should it be a goal. The way that Canada came together over the last couple of decades, going from a foundation where it was English and French.... There was settlement taking place and there were indigenous peoples who lived here prior to Europeans arriving. The way that Canada evolved was in a postnational sense in the last couple of decades.

That doesn't mean it needs to be our defining approach. It's a reality that we need to accept, but we also need to create space for important conversations that are happening now about what it means to be a Canadian in 2025 and onwards.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next, for six minutes, we go to Ms. Salma Zahid.

**Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses.

Mr. Basa, my questions will be for you. I've had the pleasure of meeting you and your members of the caregiver community many times. I really want to thank you for your advocacy for the caregivers.

Caregivers play such an important role in caring for our families and for our loved ones. They are skilled workers doing work we can't find Canadians to do. In budget 2025, our new government recognized the value of personal support workers with a new tax credit, providing eligible PSWs with up to \$1,100 annually.

Before I turn to the new pilots, the government has signalled its intention to move from temporary pilots toward a permanent caregiver immigration program in the coming years. Drawing on your decade-plus of advocacy, what would the essential pillars of that permanent program need to be in terms of admission numbers, eligibility criteria and settlement supports so that Canada can reliably meet its caregiver needs for home child care and home support workers while treating those workers with the fairness and respect they deserve and need?

**Allan Ralph Basa:** First of all, allow me to take this opportunity to really thank you for the long time you have given us your ear and for giving us a voice in our struggle for better policies and advocacy. Thank you very much for being with us all those years, honourable MP Zahid.

The eligibility requirement for caregivers to become permanent residents underwent a long struggle until we were successfully granted our long appeal for the lowering of the eligibility requirement that matches the category of work that caregivers perform. Along that line, by and large, the home care worker immigration pilot is an answer to the cry of caregivers for a lowered eligibility requirement.

However, notwithstanding the lowered eligibility requirement, the dream of a caregiver to become a permanent resident continues to be in the distant sky, an illusionary gold mine, considering the challenges, the systemic problems, that hinder them from becoming permanent residents. There is a huge backlog. It's also a very small portion of immigration labour; it only constitutes, I think, 0.2% of the national level. This is a serious factor that affects the continuing demand of Canadians for caregivers, for them to fully be in the labour force.

In terms of settlement, caregivers thrive. They don't rely much on government support. They're here to work, and they thrive. The only problem is the very small allocation that is given for the caregivers in the immigration level. Take note that with the backlog of

34,400 for caregivers in 2025 and taking into account the limit that the government has set—which is to accommodate only 14% this year—we're talking about only 4,816 caregivers.

However, since that has already been filled up, of the 5,500 who were accepted last March in the home care worker immigration pilot, only 600 will be considered. The rest—4,900—will be added to the backlog of 34,400.

Again, as I have said, these are caregivers who, for the longest time, have endured at the hands of abusive employers. They know that there's no other way but to stay with their employers, no matter what. For them to not be accommodated in a very slim, very tiny level or quota.... They will again suffer from an expired work permit. They will suffer from the financial burden of the costly process of a labour market impact assessment.

On the ground, although it is the employer who should pay for the labour market impact assessment—which, on average, is \$6,000—the employer knows the desperation of the caregiver, and the caregiver will shoulder that. That is not supposed to be. The caregiver who is clinging to that hope and not losing that employer will suffer the burden of that financial cost, plus the work permit of, say, \$1,500. These are the things that are happening on the ground—and worse.

• (1600)

**Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Simard, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just want to remind you that the *d* is silent in my name. “*Simarde*” in French is not very flattering.

**The Chair:** Oh, I am sorry.

**Mario Simard:** No worries, Madam Chair.

Ms. Dovgal, I really liked that, in your opening statement, you came back in a clear and concise manner to the issue of integration. For my part, I am going to tell you about a Quebec perspective.

Talking about immigration and raising questions about it often creates terrible reputational harm, particularly for Quebec. As soon as we talk about integrating migrants or limiting the admission threshold for asylum seekers, we are labelled as racists or people who have a hard time accepting differences. However, that is not necessarily the case. In fact, we have to look at the situation as a whole.

Quebec has received more than its share of asylum seekers. There was the Roxham Road period. Then, when Mr. Trudeau called for migrants to come to Canada, it unfortunately created pressure on public services. Let us face it, it has created an untenable situation.

On the one hand, this issue has to be resolved. Above all, we have to educate not only the people, but also elected officials, so as not to make immigration an ideological issue, which is very biased and very pernicious. We are experiencing it right now. So we have to do this education work.

On the other hand, there is also work to be done on integration. I really enjoyed your presentation, since you seemed to be insisting on that. There is an integration problem from the moment people come here and unfortunately do not want to live with others. It is unfortunate, but it happens. After all, it takes a pretty strong sense of identity. However, there is a distinction to be made when it comes to Quebec's identity, where the national identity is very strong. You talked earlier about postnationalism. When I heard Mr. Trudeau say that word, I wondered if he understood its meaning. Postnational identity is initially something the Germans use. Given their past, it is entirely understandable that they want to move to a postnational identity. However, to say that we are in a postnational identity regime in Canada is far-fetched, because there are indigenous nations and there is the Quebec nation. So there are specific cultures that people have to integrate into. I am glad you pointed that out.

I would like you to tell us about the social cohesion that will be necessary for the integration of migrants. It would be very interesting if you could tell us more about that.

[English]

**Margareta Dovgal:** Thank you so much, Mr. Simard, for that.

I think it's interesting that you specifically mentioned Germany. Germany, in contrast to Canada, despite having many surface-level characteristics in common with Canada, has gone to great lengths to prioritize integration as a form and a focus of its immigration policies. It is one of the countries that receives nods and accolades for very compassionately welcoming people, particularly those fleeing war and hardship, by being really focused on how it can ensure that immigrants are meaningfully participating in the economy. One of the ways it deals with the cultural integration component is by mandating linguistic identity integration classes.

In order to immigrate to Germany, you need to speak German, and I think Quebec's example is an interesting one. I agree with your concerns that within this country and the immigration discourse, particularly in western Canada where I'm from, we often miss the Quebec example, but I think one of the ways you do that is by creating opportunities for immigrants to see themselves as Canadians beyond just living here.

When my mother was going to school for English—I think I was in kindergarten at the time—her English language class funding was cut off. She never learned English fully. She passed when I was 18 years old. That is a good example of my own background, where a failure to invest in something as basic as linguistic integration had massive knock-on consequences, because she never felt truly Canadian as a result of it, and I think it spans a full spectrum. It involves ways you can socialize with Canadians, enter the workforce and feel like you're part of society in a meaningful way.

• (1605)

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** You have one minute left, Mr. Simard.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is a symptom of something else. In Canada, the integration model is a multicultural one. Under this model, no culture is above the others, which is a somewhat idyllic vision. Unlike the rest of Canada, the integration model in Quebec, known as interculturalism, involves a foundation. This foundation tells people that things happen in French in Quebec, that it is a secular state and that the equality of men and women should not be questioned. Those shared values are put forward.

I get the impression that, in Canada, we are not able to do that right now, if only in terms of language. It is unthinkable that a person would settle in a country without being able to speak one of the two official languages. I understand that, because of your mother's experience, this strikes a chord with you, but I think we need to set up much more robust integration policies in Canada.

I would like you to tell us about that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Simard and Ms. Dovgal.

**Mario Simard:** You can answer that question in writing, Ms. Dovgal.

**The Chair:** I will give you some time, Ms. Dovgal.

[English]

Please answer in 15 seconds.

**Margareta Dovgal:** Canadian identity and Canadian history started with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we need to not forget that.

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

We're going to begin our second round, which is now five minutes.

Mr. Ma is going to begin. Thank you.

**Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Thank you Madam Speaker.

My questions will be addressed to Ms. Dovgal.

You wrote a piece about a strong national culture. Specifically, you highlighted the “peril of maintaining civic cohesion amid a multi-ethnic society.”

Very briefly, please define what you mean by national civic cohesion. In your opinion, how have immigration levels in the last five to 10 years affected overall national civic cohesion in Canada?

**Margareta Dovgal:** I'm a historian by training. I became a public policy analyst and commentator after spending five years studying the religions and cultures of east Asia in a premodern context. I spent a lot of time studying what it takes for a civilization to form and the conditions under which a civilization can retain its relevance and strength in a world of changes. The nature of the changes we are seeing today in the 21st century is truly remarkable. It's a very different world. Things move very quickly.

Civic cohesion and identity in today's context have to be about how we maintain a high degree of trust with each other, because systems alone are not enough to do that. People need to be able to trust that the person they share a wall with, if they live in a condo or a townhouse, is someone they can trust to look out for them. It's about trusting that informal systems, like those in employment, are going to be fair and they're not going to be baked with the results. Things like that are crucial and part of the answer.

I think the lack of looking at that as a priority in how we structure our immigration system explains much of the tension we have seen around immigration as an issue. It also explains why, often, when immigrants come to this country, they don't understand why the rules exist, particularly when no one's enforcing them, which is a common refrain you hear from immigrants. They ask, "Are you telling me I could just lie on my taxes?" That's a thing I've heard. I'm not endorsing that view, but a lot of people say that because they don't understand how we can simultaneously have "high trust" and law enforcement. We're seeing that high trust disintegrate in live time right now.

• (1610)

**Michael Ma:** Riding on that, you talked about culture and integration in Canada. What cultural demands would you make of newcomers to Canada to restore the value of Canadian citizenship?

**Margareta Dovgal:** Obey the law, first of all. Respect pluralism and respect that people come from different places. If you bear hatred toward someone of a different creed, ethnicity or linguistic identity that accords with tensions and sectarian divides that come from the place you originate from, you shouldn't bring those things with you to Canada.

I think that's a reasonable expectation, and it's one that, unfortunately, we have not placed on newcomers nearly to the extent that we could.

**Michael Ma:** Building on that, what weight would you give to residency requirements in terms of language proficiency tests and citizenship tests?

**Margareta Dovgal:** Based on my own experiences, I would structure it based on the class of immigration. We see different socio-economic outcomes for immigrants.

I worked at Statistics Canada for a couple of years, years back, in the census of population unit, particularly on immigration data, and I worked on some files where we looked at what was called the immigration longitudinal database. When immigrants come, their immigration class has a great impact on their overall socio-economic outcomes in this country, including whether they're hospitalized, whether they die early and whether they or their children attain education.

That fact stayed with me, and I think it should stay within this conversation, because if you're imposing linguistic fluency requirements on newcomers, you need to do so with an eye to whether they have the means to afford the types of education they need to be proficient in a language. If they're an economic immigrant, perhaps they pay for it themselves, and if they're coming under family reunification or as refugee, perhaps the state should support that.

**Michael Ma:** How would you feel if we gave away Canadian citizenship without meeting these requirements that you just mentioned?

**Margareta Dovgal:** I think giving away citizenship without considering things like integration, linguistic fit and cultural fit is a unique thing in the context of a world that has lots of people migrating at all times. Many other countries like Canada are highly desirable places to live. No other countries, unlike Canada, are quite as lax about the standards to which we hold newcomers and immigrants.

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

Next we have Mr. Fragiskatos for five minutes.

**Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing today.

Mr. Hengeveld, thank you very much for being here. Your organization is an important one doing critical work on economic issues, and that's where I want to take my question. Under Prime Minister Carney, the federal government is now enacting reforms. We saw a key part of those reforms articulated in budget 2025 with respect to the levels plan.

Under the Prime Minister, economic policy is crucial to immigration. Immigration policy has been in the past—and needs to continue to always be—fundamentally about economic policy and fostering greater economic growth.

With that in mind, can you give us one or two key recommendations on what you would like to see in our immigration policy that you think could foster further economic growth? I know you've provided testimony here, but it's good to have this opportunity to engage with you and have a conversation around it.

**Daniel Hengeveld:** I think I'd like to go back to where I started my opening address with regard to business immigration, which is what I am speaking about today.

Our clients, it's important to recognize, operate in a competitive environment, as does Toronto Global. When a company is thinking about international expansion, not only is it risky, but they are evaluating a number of other jurisdictions on the merits of immigration policy, access to talent, cost of doing business, quality of life and ease of capital access. These are factors that play into a variety of discussions and equations. Ultimately, companies factor in all of these when they make a decision.

As it relates to your question about immigration policy, we view this as a competitive advantage for Canada. Companies, when they make those decisions, look at that and ask, "How, as part of my international expansion, can I bring senior talent into Canada to set up operations, to ultimately grow and scale our companies here and to hire Canadian workers?" There is a direct economic benefit to the work we do and to immigration policy, especially as that relates to hiring Canadians through these means.

To answer your question, I think our recommendations would be, through our clients, clarity, predictability and open communication as it relates to the immigration policy.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Thank you very much.

I have about two minutes left. I want to ask Mr. Basa a question as well.

Clearly, sir, caregiving is about providing a social benefit. This is what comes from it in the main, but there are negative economic impacts when we lack caregivers in this country. Can you give us an overview of what the situation is in Canada with respect to caregivers or the lack thereof, and how you think the immigration system has helped and, more importantly, can help in this area in the future?

• (1615)

**Allan Ralph Basa:** I don't know if I heard it right. I have a hearing problem.

I think one thing the government must also look into is the uniqueness of caregiving jobs. Caregiving is a job that is in isolation. Caregivers are in a workplace, in a household. There are no human resources. There's no union. Their vulnerability to exploitation is inherent.

I think the government must seriously consider that, because we have a caregiver occupation that is in crisis. As I speak, there are caregivers who are mentally tormented by the pressures they are experiencing in their households. The government should look into this and come up with an effective mechanism to address the vulnerability of this type of job.

**The Chair:** One minute.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** I understand that. I don't mean to cut you off, sir, but I have, as you just heard, about a minute left, and those points I don't diminish, but I want to ask you this specifically. Your view is that the immigration system is key to securing, among other things, caregivers, which are in need in Canada. Can you talk about that?

Can you talk about how you continue to believe fundamentally that the immigration system is vital for ensuring we have more caregivers, which are obviously needed, in Canadian society? Sourcing them domestically isn't going to be very fruitful.

**Allan Ralph Basa:** Can you....

**Peter Fragiskatos:** Okay, sir. I have about 15 seconds. The immigration system is vital for securing caregivers. This is what you're putting to us. We need to continue to look to the immigration system to fill those gaps. This is very clear.

**Allan Ralph Basa:** Yes, yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Basa.

Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

[Translation]

Mr. Simard, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. Dovgal, I want to come back to what we were saying earlier, because I do not want you to misunderstand what I meant. Earlier, I talked to you about postnationalism among Germans. I do not want to start theorizing, but I just want to explain my point of view.

This concept was introduced in the 1960s and 1970s by a philosopher named Jürgen Habermas, who wanted to develop patriotism among Germans. How could this be done in the 1960s and 1970s in Germany? You certainly could not talk about nationalism since we know what happened during the Second World War. Habermas's solution was to find a way for immigrants to give their consent to Germany's principles of political association and to its constitution. That is where the idea of postnationalism comes from. Unfortunately, it was misconstrued by politicians here in Canada, who said that we were a postnational state.

In my opinion, what we should instead be trying to do through our immigration system is to develop a sense of belonging, of shared history, of living together or *vivre-ensemble*, even if that term is a bit overused. Personally, as a Quebecker, I do not believe that can be achieved through multiculturalism, where what you are trying to do is erase the shared history, erase the historical references we have in living together.

I would like to hear what you have to say about integration, which allows us to share a sense of belonging.

[English]

**Margareta Dovgal:** As Quebec shows us, being a people and being a nation is about more than just living in one geography together. This is a harder truth to fully roll out in a country that has gone through a period of postnationalism than if we had never gone this route. As someone who benefited from an immigration policy that allowed for my family to come from eastern Europe, I'm grateful that this was—

[Translation]

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

[English]

**Margareta Dovgal:** I would note that it is incumbent upon Canadian political leadership to now think seriously beyond postnationalism, go post postnationalism and maybe take lessons from places like Quebec that have never given up their faith and their cultural identity.

• (1620)

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Simard and Ms. Dovgal.

[English]

Next we have Mr. Davies, not Mr. Don Davies, for five minutes.

**Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Hengeveld, could you quickly give me a brief profile of the companies that you generally speak with that are interested in coming to Canada? Can you break it down by region, just generally?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** The companies that we work with are anything from start-ups and scaling companies based internationally to what you might think of as Fortune 500s.

These are industry-agnostic. We work with companies in everything from advanced manufacturing to food and beverage to technology to, in some degree, energy. It's a very wide-ranging group of companies from all over the world. Those markets, which I think is what you were referring to, typically originate a great deal from the U.S. There's a portion from Europe, primarily from the U.K. and Germany, and then from the Indo-Pacific region, which would include India, Japan, South Korea and, to some degree, Taiwan.

**Fred Davies:** Generally then, what would the average investment be from these companies coming into Canada?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** The average investment size, measured in terms of jobs, would be anywhere from about 50 to 80 people per investment. Sometimes we have much larger ones; sometimes we have much smaller ones. Typically, in terms of a capex investment, you'd be looking at anywhere from \$5 million to about \$25 million per investment.

**Fred Davies:** Thank you.

Over the last couple of years, as the immigration system collapsed from effectively an open border policy to what we have today, have you seen patterns or changes in the clients and the needs? Have you seen a decrease in the number of companies that are showing interest in coming to Canada?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** It works in two ways. Early in the evaluation process, as I mentioned earlier, there are a variety of factors that companies measure and evaluate, immigration being one of them. Changes and challenges with those immigration policies mean that companies may rank Canada lower when they look to make that location decision.

The second way in which it impacts businesses is for companies that have established here and have used one of the business streams to bring in a senior leader. They are looking at growing their business but may face some challenges, for instance, in converting their one-year visa into permanent residency. They're then saying, because of these challenges, "I don't know if I can continue to grow my business in Canada". Therefore, we might see a pause. We might see a slowdown versus their growth projections and so on and so forth.

**Fred Davies:** Let me pick up on that. You're saying that you have noticed a difference because of the uncertainty of whether these people can actually get permanent residency here?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** It's fair to say that the uncertainty is playing into business decisions.

**Fred Davies:** Has that impacted, in your view, the level of investment that is coming to Canada?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** It's impossible to put an exact number on it, given the variety of factors involved. I think it's safe to say, though, that the clients we are working with, who I am advocating on behalf of today and who are experiencing these challenges, see it as a

risk to their growth pattern and are therefore considering either slowing that growth or potentially pausing it.

**Fred Davies:** Typically, in these companies that you represent or help come to Canada, on average is it one or is it more than one person who wants to obtain status in Canada?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** If I understand your question correctly, how many of the number of...? Typically, it's a very small number per investment or per company that's expanding to Canada. It's one to two senior leaders.

Their goal is to bring their technical expertise, their leadership and their business model to Canada, establish the expansion here, and then hire, scale and bring Canadian workers on board. Sometimes—and in fact, for the vast majority—these are fairly temporary, where it's going to be one, two, three or maybe five years until they get the company up and running.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Daniel Hengeveld:** Once they feel that they've hit that level in confidence, they might then return to their home country.

**Fred Davies:** It's a situation where for most of these companies that are coming here—I'm going to differentiate that these are substantial companies with substantial capital assets—the leadership that comes here doesn't typically stay in Canada, then.

**Daniel Hengeveld:** To clarify, some do. Some may choose to stay here, build a life here and bring their family. Others may choose to return to their home country. It varies.

**Fred Davies:** Do you have any data on that at all?

● (1625)

**Daniel Hengeveld:** It's safe to assume that roughly one-third of the companies that Toronto Global interacts with and brings to Canada access business immigration programs. It's safe to assume that of that one-third, the majority are using these business pathways and are considering staying as part of that or potentially returning. I'm afraid I don't have an exact number for you right now.

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

Next, we have Ms. Zahid for five minutes. That will be the last of our five minutes and then this panel will be completed.

**Salma Zahid:** Mr. Basa, I would like to ask you a question on the out-of-status caregivers. These are the people who have come to Canada legally, have been contributing to our economy and paying taxes and have only fallen out of status due to paperwork processing delays or to some language requirements.

Do you believe there should be an amnesty or a program to bring these people into status? What should that look like?

**Allan Ralph Basa:** We believe that amnesty should be given for these caregivers who have fallen out of status because of systemic issues in the processing, which consists of delay and the low cap. The government should address that. The immigration program the government has must take into account the impact that it caused to the caregivers for this matter.

These caregivers have spent a very long period of time working legally and they have complied with all the requirements. For one reason or another, which is not their fault.... They came here legally. They played the game fairly with the rules that were set when they came in and all of a sudden they were caught on some requirements. They were caught on inequitable delay in processing, causing them to be out of status. The government must consider that. That defines fairness. That defines justice in the immigration system, which Canada is known for.

I truly believe that this must be seriously looked into because that has happened in the past and that is continuously happening now. When one submits an application—for example, to the home care worker immigration pilot—and the work permit given by the government is only for one year, by the time he or she receives an acknowledgement of receipt, she already has fallen out of status.

There are some multifarious considerations. For example, the government should look into the impact of low cap and long processing times as to the situations of these caregivers.

**Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

Mr. Basa, the new home care worker immigration pilot that launched in March 2025 lowered the language requirement and granted permanent residence on arrival—steps that many caregivers have been telling us for a long time that they hoped for.

From your direct work with hundreds of caregivers and their families, what has been the most positive impact you have seen so far with that program?

**Allan Ralph Basa:** The program has highlighted the long-awaited lowering of eligibility requirements. The impact is positive, but the system is not prepared for this program vis-à-vis its capacity to process the number of caregiver permanent residency applications. There is a very limited cap and there are systemic issues along the way, such as the work permit expiring even before the receipt of AOR. These are technical things that we should consider. That is a consequential impact of their program.

Now, government, for example, should consider—

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Allan Ralph Basa:** —that upon the acceptance of their applications, they should give these caregivers a provisional open work permit until the government is able to acknowledge receipt of their applications—which, by the way, are complete and in compliance with all the requirements—so as to prevent the continuous falling out of status of these caregivers, who have been awaiting their permanent residency for five or 10 years, suffering from legal separation and all this stuff. Again, the impact is positive, but there are technical issues, matters that the government should consider, that they should adjust on the ground in consideration of their limitations as to their capacity to process the number of permanent residency applications and a very limited cap for the caregivers.

• (1630)

**Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Mr. Basa. I really appreciate your input.

**The Chair:** Thank you to all the witnesses.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your presentations.

[*English*]

**Fred Davies:** Madam Chair, I have a point of order. I'm sorry to interrupt.

Mr. Hengeveld made mention that he didn't have the stats in front of him. I wonder if he would be able to file a report with the committee to follow up on my question on the number of people who come in under his investment portfolio and stay in Canada versus those who leave Canada.

**The Chair:** Would you be okay to provide that, Mr. Hengeveld?

**Daniel Hengeveld:** I will see if we have that data. If we have it, I would be delighted to provide it. I will do my best.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

Again, thank you to all the witnesses for their excellent testimony and their contribution to this important study.

We are going to suspend for five to 10 minutes so that we can transition to the next panel.

Thank you.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Welcome back to our second panel today.

For the benefit of our new witnesses, I'd like to make a few comments.

For those on Zoom, as a reminder, you can click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and kindly mute yourself whenever you are not speaking so that we can make sure we avoid any background noise. As well, at the bottom of your screens, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French.

For those in the room, I encourage everyone to use an earpiece and select the desired channel.

As always—and this is more toward our witnesses—kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I'd like to formally welcome our three witnesses for our second panel this afternoon.

We have Mr. Doug Parton, business manager and financial secretary for Ironworkers Local 97.

From the World Education Services, we have Ms. Shamira Madhany, managing director, Canada, and deputy executive director.

From the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, we have Mr. Peter Copeland, who's the deputy director of domestic policy.

Each one of you will have five minutes to give opening remarks, after which we will go to rounds of questions.

I'm going to begin with Mr. Parton of the Ironworkers Local 97 for five minutes please.

**Doug Parton (Business Manager and Financial Secretary, Ironworkers Local 97):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Doug Parton, and I am the business manager of the Ironworkers Local 97, representing more than 2,400 members across British Columbia. Our members build bridges, towers, dams—

**The Chair:** Mr. Parton, could you pause for a second? You have put something in front of your camera. We prefer to see you to make sure you're not an AI-generated voice. Thank you.

**Doug Parton:** All right.

We build LNG sites, public transit and industrial projects to keep our province and our country powered and moving.

Ironworkers take great pride in our craft. We invest heavily in apprenticeship skills development and safety. Every person in our craft knows they're part of something bigger: building communities and building Canada. Our role is to supply labour.

That is why this issue matters so much. The temporary foreign worker program's construction stream was meant to be a last resort when no local labour was available for critical infrastructure. However, in British Columbia, and particularly in our trade, it has been used far too often and not as intended.

We are seeing employers using the program as a business model for cheaper, untrained labour, not as a measure of last resort. They are claiming shortages that don't exist and are using temporary foreign workers to drive down wages and to bypass Canadian tradespeople who are ready and able to work, tradespeople who invested in their training and skills development.

In fact, the federal job bank wage data lists rates as much as \$10.44 below the hourly wage actually paid in our industry. The flawed data leads to bad actors who claim a shortage, and who import cheaper labour to avoid paying fair collective agreement and PLA-negotiated wages. Multi-employer agreements, freely negotiated, represent an accurate market perception, or they would not be agreed to.

This wage suppression isn't just about fairness; it's about the ability to make a living. When federal wage benchmarks undervalue construction work by \$10 or more per hour and do not consider benefits packages, it only drives down the market. It also leaves workers unable to afford housing, food and transportation in the very communities they help to build.

The government has defined the prevailing wage as related to an eligibility for investment tax credits, and this is one of our recom-

mendations. The number of TFWs brought in under the construction scheme is disproportionately high, despite a strong local workforce and record union investments in training.

This not only hurts our members but also weakens apprenticeship recruitment, undermines career pathways for young Canadians and creates unsafe conditions for workers unfamiliar with Canadian standards and job site expectations.

Safety is not negotiable in our trade. Ironworking is dangerous and technical and demands rigorous training. When the system allows unverified labour to enter work sites through loopholes, it puts everybody at risk. We cannot compromise safety for cost.

These are our recommendations.

The first is to require consultation with union and local building trades before approving any trade-related LMIA so that we can confirm whether local workers are available. If there is an available supply, the employer should not be granted an LMIA.

Second, replace the job bank standards with accurate, collectively bargained prevailing wages that reflect the livable wages and the real cost of living in provinces like B.C.

Third, restrict TFW access to employers who invest in the training of Canadians and who have a clear apprenticeship plan to transition back to a domestic workforce.

● (1645)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Doug Parton:** Finally, pause any approvals while a review of the new framework is in place.

We support immigration done right. We respect every worker who contributes to building this country. But we must ensure that the system reflects Canadian values, fairness and opportunity for all. Our message is simple: Invest in Canadian workers first. Give us the tools and training capacity and we will meet Canada's labour needs right away, with a safe, skilled, homegrown workforce that strengthens our economy and provides meaningful careers in the trades.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Parton.

We will now go to Ms. Madhany for five minutes, please.

**Shamira Madhany (Managing Director, Canada and Deputy Executive Director, World Education Services):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Shamira Madhany. I am the deputy executive director and Canadian managing director of World Education Services, WES.

On behalf of WES, I'm pleased to contribute to this study on Canada's immigration system. WES has been one of five organizations designated by IRCC to provide educational credential assessments under express entry. In 2024 alone, WES processed more than 251,000 applications as part of our broader mission as a not-for-profit social enterprise that supports immigrants, refugees and international students.

Today I will focus on how the immigration system can be renewed and strengthened to support Canada's future. As we know, immigration has been foundational to our economic prosperity and social identity. Recently, however, support for immigration has eroded. Policy responses favour short-term fixes over long-term planning.

To build one Canadian economy, we must fully integrate immigrant talent into our labour market and embed immigration into our social fabric. The reality is that more than 20% of Canadians are over 65. Canadians' productivity continues to lag and our GDP is declining, and yet we have one of the most educated populations of G7 countries. This is partly because we have such a highly educated immigrant population where one in three immigrants is underemployed. We have all experienced a conversation with an Uber driver who is a trained surgeon or civil engineer, or perhaps even a nurse. The scale and scope of this skills mismatch costs us up to \$50 billion in GDP annually.

As the federal government embraces immigration as a nation-building strategy, Canada needs coherent coordination mechanisms and systematic reforms to ensure that newcomers and all Canadians can thrive for generations to come. To advance this vision, WES offers three reinforcing recommendations.

First, levels planning must go beyond numbers alone. It must be guided by clear objectives, principles and measurable outcomes. This can be achieved by creating a new cross-departmental coordinating body, including such key federal ministries as IRCC, ESDC and Health Canada. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach means immigration planning must be part of a cross-functional effort to advance national economic and social goals, including infrastructure initiatives, accessible housing and closing Canada's skills gap.

Second, we must address the mismatch in skills through a national skills strategy that includes immigrant skills recognition and labour mobility. On the one hand, Canada invites professionals in health care and skilled trades through our immigration system. On the other hand, we allow these skills to go to waste. Research shows that 47% of internationally educated health care professionals are working outside their field or are underemployed. Meanwhile, the federal government anticipates a shortage of more than 117,000 nurses by 2030 and 20,000 family doctors by 2031. A harmonized skills strategy future-proofs Canada's workforce and posi-

tions immigration levels planning as a core foundation for population renewal and economic growth.

Third, we need a comprehensive transition plan with clear pathways from temporary to permanent residency. The federal government has prioritized permanent immigration as the foundation of its strategy, and yet there's limited detail on transitioning temporary residents, including how many will gain pathways and on what timeline.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Shamira Madhany:** Many temporary residents have been in Canada for years, employed, paying taxes and contributing to the economy. Prioritizing permanent residency ensures a stable system, especially in sectors that rely on temporary workers despite long-term labour needs.

Madam Chair, the only way we will build a stronger Canada together is one where newcomers can put down roots, thrive in the workplace and contribute fully to society.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Madhany.

Next, we're going to go to Mr. Copeland of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute for five minutes.

**Peter Copeland (Deputy Director, Domestic Policy, Macdonald-Laurier Institute):** Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for having me. It's my pleasure to contribute.

Canada's once-strong immigration consensus has unravelled. The 2022-24 surge did not create the crisis so much as exposed the limits of a world view that treated openness, autonomy, mobility, and diversity as unqualified goods. A model built on boundlessness has now collided with reality, and we're relearning that people are not infinitely malleable and societies require shared norms, bonds and identity to flourish.

For decades, policy followed an extreme open society ideal that downplayed borders, integration and common culture. The result has been diffuse national identity, declining trust, strained services and civic fatigue. A serious reset must return to first principles, what immigration is for and what kind of society it must sustain.

The examples of failure in the present system abound. Canada's increasing reliance on temporary migrant labour has depressed wages in some sectors and entrenched low productivity business models. Employers can rely on a rotating pool of precarious workers rather than investing in training or technology.

The post-secondary sector shows a similar pattern. Universities and colleges have become financially dependent on international students, driving aggressive recruitment, inflated tuition and, in some cases, low-quality programs and dubious employer and international partnerships.

Far from diversity being an outright strength, a recent 2020 meta-analysis estimates that a robust negative relationship between local ethnic diversity and social trust exists in the short term across all studies. This suggests shared norms, customs, mannerisms, beliefs and behaviours are crucial to the facilitation of everything from basic interactions on the street to broader co-operation, integration and trust at higher levels of social interaction. Trust data reflect this. Canada's general social survey shows generalized trust in people was stable at around 54% from 2000 to 2013 and has now declined to levels in the mid-forties.

Over the last 20 years, Canada has seen social trust decline and become more fragmented and fragile, with stronger pockets of mistrust and loneliness in precisely the big, diverse metros that carry most of the immigrant and population growth. One would expect this when the proportion of immigrants as a share of the population rises from 15% to 25%, not including non-permanent residents and foreign-born citizens, as it has from the early 1990s to the present day. These pressures are compounded by weaknesses in border integrity. Asylum backlogs, inconsistent enforcement and permissive temporary resident programs have eroded confidence in the system, creating openings for organized crime, trafficking networks and diaspora-driven political conflict to thrive on the streets of our major cities and university campuses.

Immigration has also been used to mask deeper demographic challenges. Canada's total fertility rate fell to an all-time low of 1.25 last year. Immigrants often arrive with stronger family structures, but over time many adopt the same hyper-individualistic norms that suppress domestic fertility. Using immigration to paper over demographic decline is not only arithmetically impossible but also signals that the aspiration to marry and raise a family, one of the most basic and natural human desires, crucial to individual and social well-being alike, is of secondary concern to policy-makers.

What's more, foundational social goods are weakening under relentless autonomy and mobility. The Global Flourishing Study shows that marriage, family stability, community ties, religious participation and purpose are central predictors of human well-being. Our fundamentalist commitment to openness, autonomy, individualism and choice, as exemplified by the values that animate our immigration system, strain several of these pillars simultaneously, and Canada now scores poorly on many of them.

I will argue that these challenges are not merely technical, they're philosophical. Immigration is embedded in an ecosystem of culture, economics, demography and identity, so reform must begin with a change in world view. Diversity is only a strength when embedded within a unifying framework. Our original vision for multicultural-

ism understood this. As Michael Bonner notes in a piece for the Macdonald-Laurier Institute—

• (1655)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Peter Copeland:** —the royal commission that preceded the development of official multiculturalism mentioned the term only twice, and stressed the idea of “acculturation”, emphasizing integration of immigrants into a Canadian way of life and a harmonious system that could achieve unity in diversity, advice not heeded in the development of the official policy.

I think we should look to the Danes, who have a fairly restrictive, tightly managed immigration and integration regime. They limit inflows, especially of asylum seekers and low-skilled migrants, and they make long-term residence and benefits conditional upon integration, where immigrants must demonstrate labour market participation, self-sufficiency and civic conformity. The rationale for the policy explicitly links immigration control to preservation of their social welfare state, recognizing that unrestricted immigration can strain social solidarity, redistribute burdens unfairly and erode trust and cohesion.

Immigration can be a profound source for good if we consider the pace, scale, promotion of social trust and integration to a much greater degree.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Copeland, with four seconds to spare.

Now we're going to begin our first round of questions, which is a six-minute round.

We begin with Ms. Rempel Garner.

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

I'll start with questions for Mr. Parton.

Mr. Parton, in early September of this year, you were cited in a news article where you gave a quote and said that they:

...bring TFWs in for 50 per cent wages and outbid employers who have been supporting the apprenticeships, investing in Canadians to train the next generation of construction workers. You lose out on the bid because you're not competitive anymore.

This committee often hears testimony that we need to sustain the high levels of immigration that Canada has seen over the last several years, but I find that incongruent with data that shows we have a serious youth jobs crisis.

Can you expand on the statement you made and talk about why it is important to scrap the TFW program and perhaps more important to be training Canadian youth, looking at productivity measures within and incenting productivity measures within industry rather than relying on immigration to address some of these gaps?

**Doug Parton:** Yes, absolutely.

When I said “\$10.44”, I was talking about ERSD's model wage that they think an ironworker is worth. Certainly in our union, it's upwards of that. It's probably a 45% to 50% higher wage bracket.

I would talk about the work that my local has done specifically in attracting young Canadians, young ladies and young fellows, to come to what we call “boot camp”, where they spend two to three weeks. It's a kind of a pre-apprentice thing: Earn while you learn. We ran 140 young ladies and young men through that, and 102 are still with us. It was an 80% retention rate. All of those young people are out at work for \$30 an hour as a starting wage, and they all entered into the apprenticeship.

When we talk about temporary foreign workers, I think the median wage for them in ironwork was \$30 to \$31 an hour. Why would I, as a young person, if that was the top wage I was going to get as a journeyman after taking all this training, even enter the trade, when I could go to Tim Hortons and make \$18 or \$19?

• (1700)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Can I interject, just for time?

There's a canard or a bit of a fallacy, I think, or this perception that high levels of temporary foreign workers, whether they come in through the traditional TFW stream, or in unsustainable levels through student permits, don't take first job opportunities from Canadian youth.

Do you think that statement is true? Or, from what you've seen in your union, does it actually show the opposite, which is that it actually in fact does take opportunities from Canadian youth?

**Doug Parton:** It does. It cuts the legs out from underneath the apprenticeship system as well.

Four to five years ago, 80% of all the TFW ironworkers came to B.C. It was statistically impossible that somehow British Columbia was living in the Goldilocks zone.... It became a business model of low wages. When you're paying low wages in the city of Burnaby.... If you google it right now and ask what you need to afford rent in the city of Burnaby, it's about \$42 an hour.

Not only were we undercutting wages for everyday working Canadians, but we were also doing a disservice to the TFWs as well.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Just to be clear, you would advise the committee to recommend that the government scrap the TFW program and reduce other forms of temporary work permits in lieu of perhaps focusing more on apprenticeship training and securing opportunities for Canadian youth. Is that correct?

**Doug Parton:** Yes. Again, I'd go back to my recommendations.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Thank you.

With the time I have left, I'm going to go to Mr. Copeland.

You talked a bit about the Danish model and the need for integration.

It's sometimes a taboo topic, but I think we are starting to see a loss of cultural cohesion in Canada. We have to be very sensitive about how we talk about it so that we're not eroding Canada's pluralism through the discussion, but we also can't assume that Canada's pluralism is going to be maintained without having the discussion in a structured way. You talked about the Danish model.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** With the time I have left, could you give a few recommendations to the committee? Also, would you be willing to put in additional written recommendations for how to achieve the integration that you talked about in your remarks?

**Peter Copeland:** Certainly, I'd be happy to provide additional written recommendations.

I would agree that it's a very fine line to tread. When I think about integration, we have to ensure that there are responsibilities and duties, on the part of immigrants, but we also need to provide adequate support.

I think the Danish model is interesting, in that it makes the receipt of certain benefits, for both temporary classes and, then, permanent residents, conditional upon certain things. For temporary...they actually have to demonstrate their own capacity to provide for benefits of various types of social services, health care, what have you. For long-term permanent status, they need to demonstrate consistent labour market participation, civic literacy and language acquisition. Denmark is a country with an integration act. There are a number of other countries like Canada, peer nations like Netherlands and Germany, that have things like this. It's something we should look to incorporate, perhaps into our Multiculturalism Act or citizenship—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next, for six minutes, we have Mr. Zuberi.

**Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I am going to start with Ms. Madhany. I really appreciate your testimony, what you've shared with us and also your expertise within the field—helping newly landed people be well employed within Canada, to the appropriate level of their training and background. That's really a very salutary and important mission of yours.

In our federal budget 2025, we have a new program, called the foreign credential recognition action fund, which is being funded to the tune of \$97 million. This fund speaks to what you were actually testifying about. How do you see this fund helping out with what you've highlighted, which is ensuring that newly landed people, immigrants, are well, properly and fully employed within their fields?

• (1705)

**Shamira Madhany:** The \$97 million is a good step in that there is funding provided. However, what's going to become really important is what's missing: We need to have a harmonized system in which there are licensing processes that are clear to individuals, newcomers, before they come and after they arrive; and coordination among federal departments, provinces and licensing bodies so that they're working in concert, and so that an individual who comes here isn't struggling to figure out where they get the information from, how they're going to get licensed and the timelines.

I hope the \$97 million go towards systemic approaches in which there are national and harmonized standards—an individual goes to the province of their choice, they're able to tell really quickly how long it's going to take and the licence they will get, and then they can contribute to our economy straight away. It's a good first step, but...systemic approaches and harmonized standards, basically at the national and provincial levels, in collaboration with the licensing bodies.

**Sameer Zuberi:** The fact that you're testifying to this, I'm sure, if it hasn't already, will help sharpen and highlight the fact that these earmarked monies should be going to exactly what you said: working with the provinces and the licensing boards, which are regulated by provinces. Being from Quebec, I know there are about 40-odd professional orders that are regulated by the provincial government, such as accountants, lawyers, doctors, nurses and many others. Of those multiple professions within each and every province, which would you suggest be prioritized?

**Shamira Madhany:** At this point, what we know is that our demographic profile is showing that we are going to have one in three individuals who are going to retire, basically, from the workplace. As we have an aging population, the health sector is where we will have shortages. We know that the federal government has made health care professions a priority, so what I see as the priority are physicians, nurses and adjacent medical professionals—med lab technicians, etc. The second would be teachers.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Physicians are a challenging one, because those are always orders that are very careful in terms of broadening admission.

Aside from what you said already, there are credential recognitions needed in order to have skilled professionals enter fields. Do you have anything else to add to reduce those delays for credential recognition within specific skilled fields?

**Shamira Madhany:** Sure. The whole issue of academic credential recognition has been resolved. That's what World Education Services does.

What we have is an issue of skills recognition and competency assessment, and that currently is a gap where we don't have standardized tools to assess somebody's credentials from an experience perspective, so we start using proxies like not having Canadian experience.

What we need are tools that are standardized, using technology to understand how somebody's skills can basically be transferred to the Canadian context in the workplace so they can quickly get licensed and start working. That's a gap that needs to be addressed.

**The Chair:** You have one minute, please.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Thank you.

Could you elaborate on that? You mentioned there are things happening for the skilled professions, but you identified that, outside of academic credentials, there needs to be a validation of previous work experience and how to translate that into an understanding that we in Canada can appreciate.

Do you want to add more about how that can actually be done?

• (1710)

**Shamira Madhany:** What you need is basically a skills recognition process that is faster, fairer and more transparent. You need to have harmonized requirements across the federal and provincial government licensing bodies. You need to have cross-government collaboration so you don't have immigration working separately from health and licensing bodies, and you need measurable outcomes. It's a skills framework that needs to be put in place so everybody's working in concert versus immigration, labour market and health working separately. What needs to happen is a skills recognition framework.

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

Ms. Cody, I want to say a warm welcome to you. I didn't realize Mr. Redekopp had left, but you are warmly welcomed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simard, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Copeland, I just want to check that the interpretation is working properly and that you cannot hear my raucous voice, but the interpreters' soft voice.

**Peter Copeland:** Yes, it is working.

I am listening to the interpretation, but I can also speak French.

**Mario Simard:** I appreciate that.

**Peter Copeland:** I am still going to speak in English, though.

**Mario Simard:** That is excellent.

In your opening statement, you alluded to multiculturalism and the famous Laurendeau-Dunton commission.

For a bit of history, let us recall that the Laurendeau-Dunton commission aimed to define a Canadian identity based on biculturalism and bilingualism. In the end, biculturalism was set aside in favour of multiculturalism. Trudeau senior wanted that. He did not necessarily want Quebec to have its rightful place in the constitution. However, biculturalism is now part of history, and Canada is focused on a system of integration that we see today, known as multiculturalism, where all cultures are on an equal footing. However, according to a number of analyses, placing all cultures on an equal footing is like recognizing none, which is somewhat problematic.

I say that because I think that, in establishing a migrant integration system, multiculturalism is not efficient enough to create shared identities.

On many occasions, my party has introduced a bill to remove Quebec from the sphere of multiculturalism so that we can shape our own integration system, which we present as the interculturalism system and which is based on a foundation. Interculturalism in Quebec is based on a common foundation. That means that there is a common language, which is French, and that there are principles that are essential, particularly secularism and equality between men and women. In a way, to be a Quebecker, you have to agree to adhere to these principles.

I have a fairly simple question for you. Do you think that each province should have the opportunity, in the context of the Canadian federation, to have its own integration system? Would that be a way to develop more social cohesion, to develop a greater sense of belonging? Is that a potential solution?

I am ready to hear what you have to say on the subject.

[English]

**Peter Copeland:** I think the rest of Canada has much to learn from Quebec's approach to creating, sustaining and maintaining a strong national and local culture. I think that what you reference in Quebec has, in fact, been found in the other countries that I mentioned briefly in my last response. They have distinct acts that promote certain things and tie requirements to integration and to the receipt of benefits and things of this nature. I think there are many different ways in which provinces can achieve and have strong local or provincial cultures. Canada, through its Multiculturalism Act or through amendments to other legislation like the Citizenship Act, could indeed adopt some of the things that Quebec has done, I think, successfully to promote cohesion, shared identity and common values.

• (1715)

[Translation]

**Mario Simard:** Speaking of shared values, I will tell you a story. Then I will let you respond.

In 1998, when I was a student at the University of Ottawa, we were presented with extensive Canadian research to define what Canadian identity is in the American system, that is, what makes a Canadian different from an American.

When a Quebecker was asked the question, his answer was quite simple. Language came first. Culture was second. The third difference struck me because, as strange as it may seem, it was our soap operas. Do not ask me why, I really do not know. But those were the differences.

When we put the question to an English Canadian, he told us that what made him different from an American was our public health care system and the fact that we were living in multiculturalism, not a melting pot.

Is there no other definition of being a Canadian? Does multiculturalism make it difficult to define what Canadian identity is, what it looks like, what it is based on and what it is structured around?

No one wants to use that kind of thinking today, because it would run counter to the dominant discourse that says we have to be open to other people, to let us be transformed by them, to be a host society that does not set parameters for integration.

If you are able to do so, I would like you to give me some indication of what defines Canadian identity. I am still looking for the answer to that question, even after many years, even after more than 20 years.

[English]

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

**Peter Copeland:** It's a great question.

We have seen a kind of flash in the pan here in light of U.S. aggression, the kind of Anglo-Canadian identity flare-up as precisely anti-Americanism. Beyond relatively trivial and thin commitments to hockey, politeness, kindness, maple syrup and things like this, English Canada has a rather thin identity.

I think it's precisely because we emphasize all of these procedural commitments to openness and diversity. I think that, when you do so, we end up in a situation where... I think it's true for a lot of the cosmopolitan, professional, managerial class today in that they belong anywhere, but also nowhere. In fact, it's not consistent with human anthropology. People need bonds, they need friendships, they need commitments and they need these things to be to be stable over time. You have to be committed to specific people and places over time and specific values and not others while also being accepting and tolerant. They're in no way inconsistent with that.

I like to think—

**The Chair:** Mr. Copeland, thank you so much. We're way over time. Maybe you can continue during your next chance to respond.

Next we're moving to five-minute rounds, and we begin with Mr. Ma.

**Michael Ma:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Copeland, you wrote a piece in *Without Diminishment* on the Global Flourishing Study. You highlighted that the strongest predictors of flourishing are stable families, marriage, religious participation, meaningful work and strong communities.

Leading up to that, do you agree that our national level of immigration should be tied to housing, health care and job considerations in tying all that together?

**Peter Copeland:** I do think that our annual immigration plan should be informed by information such as housing completions, rental rates in major metropolitan areas, social services availability, how available our health care service is and what have you in areas to which immigrants want to migrate.

I think we can also look at social trust barometers. Again, the general social survey does have some information on this. It could be packaged and produced better and updated more frequently.

I think these sorts of things would establish a baseline and then trends that could help inform levels planning. The more information, the better.

• (1720)

**Michael Ma:** Thank you.

You also wrote, “Flourishing requires commitment, to people, place, and tradition”. Again, in terms of traditions, what weight would you give to residency requirements, language proficiency tests and citizenship tests?

**Peter Copeland:** That's a great question.

I think more weight should be given to them. I'm not going to come out with a number here, but I think that we're very clearly in a situation right now where the balance lies away from those things.

I think we need a greater balance. That's what we should be aiming for here. We should study the matter further, reflect upon that and aim to stress these things to right the balance.

**Michael Ma:** Thank you.

You end off the article stressing that both policy and culture “should cultivate [dependencies] rightly ordered, to family, community, [and] nation”.

Can you elaborate in more detail the relationship between the current housing crisis and the failure of family formation?

**Peter Copeland:** Yes, certainly.

It is certainly a factor cited—that the inability to secure housing is one factor among many that is deterring family formation. We have an all-time low fertility rate. It's something that has economic, cultural and social consequences.

I think we need to be mindful of these sorts of things and not neglect the struggles of some of the domestic population in our immigration planning.

**Michael Ma:** Would you say that this may lead to a dilution of the values of being a Canadian?

**Peter Copeland:** I'm sorry. What would?

**Michael Ma:** If immigrants and others come into the country, would they actually lead to any kind of dilution of our Canadian values?

**Peter Copeland:** I think it really depends on a number of things. It's about pace.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Peter Copeland:** It's about the scale, and it's about the stress on integration and also the supports provided.

We have to look at these things all together. The extent to which trust improves or decreases is a result of many factors. Some of the other big influences on social trust are rule of law—adherence to the rule of law, its predictability and consistency—and the degree to which people believe that burdens are shared reasonably and that systems aren't being exploited. Both of those things, I think, are affected by Canadians' perceptions and the realities of various parts of the immigration system.

**Michael Ma:** Thank you.

I have a very short—

**The Chair:** No, I'm sorry, Mr. Ma.

Thank you.

Next, we have Ms. Sodhi for five minutes.

**Amandeep Sodhi (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Madhany, you've highlighted that helping immigrants already in Canada to fully use their skills is just as important as managing immigration levels. With recent government measures like the foreign credential recognition program funding, settlement programs and the new levels plan, how do you see these initiatives helping immigrants contribute more fully to the Canadian workforce and society?

**Shamira Madhany:** As I said in my opening remarks, when you have such a significant number of immigrants who are highly skilled and who are not working in their profession or are underemployed, that basically means low productivity for the country, and you've heard of the recent report where people are leaving.

From my perspective, when we look at the whole issue of immigration planning and those who are here, these are two separate processes. Immigration planning is for the people you bring in. You have to be careful about giving them proper information and, once they arrive, providing the supports.

Among the individuals who are already here, we have a significant number of immigrants not working in their fields, so what we need to do is make sure we have standardized processes that are harmonized, especially for those in licensed occupations, so that they don't get invited to come to Canada, go to a province and find that they're not able to work.

What we need is a skills recognition framework with a coordinated approach between the federal government and provincial government licensing bodies so that people get their licences and are able to work.

• (1725)

**Amandeep Sodhi:** Thank you for your answer.

I want to follow up on the last part of what you said.

In addition to what you already mentioned, what other metrics or indicators should the government use to know whether programs aimed at improving immigrant skills recognition and labour market integration are working?

**Shamira Madhany:** Basically, we need to make sure that, for the individuals we are inviting to the immigration express entry process, we understand that when they're coming here through a category-based process, we know whether they're actually going to get licensed or not, because what we know is that when they come, they're not getting licensed.

The first metric is to know what is happening to people when you're inviting them in a particular category.

The second is knowing, for those who end up coming to a particular province, if they are able to enter their occupation in a way that assesses their credentials and skills so that they get licensed and there aren't more barriers and duplication of language and training; there have to be opportunities for them to understand that they can take a bridging program and immediately move into getting licensed and working.

Then the third is making sure that those who are already here and in the workplace are not underutilizing their skills, so that if they're coming in as an engineer and are in the workplace, they're not just doing data entry. There needs to be a recognition program in the workplace to understand what skills they bring and how to leverage the skills for the organization.

**Amandeep Sodhi:** Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Copeland.

In an article for The Hill Times, you stated that “rebalancing intakes to align with absorptive capacity are essential if immigration is to remain both effective and publicly supported.” The new levels plan in budget 2025 will reduce the number of temporary residents from 673,000 to 385,000 next year and lower the number of permanent residents to 380,000.

What more would you recommend to continue strengthening the security and the integrity of Canada's immigration system while still welcoming newcomers?

**The Chair:** You have 40 seconds.

**Peter Copeland:** I would reiterate that it would be appropriate to start tracking information related to absorptive capacity and to make the annual immigration plan reflective of that. I think we need to look at phasing back to numbers that we saw five or 10 years ago in the various categories. These are good first steps, but we need to bring volume down further.

When it comes to border security, I was very pleased to see the government leave in the asylum components of the bill and add some clauses through the clause-by-clause process. I also think it's important to strengthen Canada's overall border security regime, and that would include pursuing the lawful access regime that was removed from Bill C-2; our Five Eyes partner nations all have lawful access regimes, so Canada remains a laggard and a standout in this regard, and that makes us vulnerable to exploitation.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simard, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

**Mario Simard:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Copeland, we could continue the discussion we were having earlier. We may try to define what Canadian identity is, but with a caveat. I do think we have to be very careful when we talk about immigration, because reputational harm happens quite quickly. Let me explain.

In Quebec, we have had discussions on immigration. We wondered whether thresholds should be established and whether integration policies should be considered. As a result, and I say this because we see it from inside Quebec, Quebecers are now known in the rest of Canada as unwelcoming people. However, you will see that it is completely the opposite if you look at the statistics on hate crimes, since Quebec is at the bottom of the list in this regard, according to the statistics. So we have to be careful about that.

When we talk about the national project, I am sure that you have seen accusations that we are nationalists, as if the word “nationalist” is a dirty word, a poisonous word. I want to be careful about that.

The fact remains that, in my view, Canadians still need to define what it means to be Canadian. I think that we Quebecers have managed to define our identity. It is clear for the French or the German what defines them, but it seems a little more problematic for Canadians.

I would like to hear your thoughts on that. You can take a little more time than the 20 seconds you were given earlier to articulate your thoughts.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

[English]

**Peter Copeland:** I think increased civic literacy would help Canadians better understand aspects of our legal and political system, which are major standouts on the world stage. These would include our Westminster parliamentary system and our peace, order and good governance. We have a best-of-both-worlds approach with our legal system. We have parliamentary democracy and we have strong rights protections.

I think of Canada as a very measured and balanced place, but we need better articulation of what specific things make us that, rather than just stressing procedural things, tolerance and things of this nature.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Copeland.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Simard.

[English]

Because we've run out of time, I'll give two minutes to Mr. Davies and two minutes to Mr. Fragiskatos, if that's okay. I will then have just one minute of committee business to make sure that everybody is on the same page as we wrap up before the holidays.

Mr. Davies, you have two minutes, please.

**Fred Davies:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Parton, I'm interested in discussing something with you.

As you know, Canada lags behind quite substantially in productivity in the G7, and that is a result of the lack of capital investment. You made some earlier comments about temporary foreign workers and wages that are much lower than what would normally be the case.

Have you noticed an impact on productivity since the changes to the temporary foreign worker program? What would you recommend to the government going forward for improvements for capital investment related to trades and the changes in immigration?

**Doug Parton:** That's a mouthful.

**Fred Davies:** I'm sorry.

**Doug Parton:** We have seen a lack of productivity, specifically in the field of ironwork and in the rebar sector and specific to the residential and commercial sectors, where you have your million-dollar condos being built in downtown Vancouver, Burnaby and throughout the Lower Mainland.

Of that, when the TFW reaches their permanent residence status or is lucky enough to be on an IEC visa.... I had 665 people walk through my door from October 24 to October 25. We took them out and assessed them. They were supposed to be here for the skilled worker shortage that we hear about, but when we assessed them, they couldn't even put the rebar belt together.

They've been used as—pardon me; I hope I don't offend anybody—pack mules, and it's not right. We've done a disservice to the TFW and we've undercut Canadian wages, and now I'm left with a decision of whether to keep the permanent resident and upskill them or invest in Canadians.

We're in this endless circle, and this problem is not going to be resolved overnight.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Parton.

Thank you, Mr. Davies. Yes, two minutes go by very quickly.

Mr. Fragiskatos, you have two minutes.

**Peter Fragiskatos:** For the analysts who will be preparing the report, it will be very helpful if each of you could give, in one or two sentences, your main recommendation here today.

**The Chair:** We'll start with Ms. Madhany, please.

**Shamira Madhany:** We have to have a holistic approach to immigration and immigration planning. It can't be just about numbers. It has to be a systemic, thoughtful approach with coordination between the federal and provincial governments and the licensing bodies. It's really important to have a coordinated, system approach.

**The Chair:** Next is Mr. Parton.

**Doug Parton:** Real quickly, I would say if and when the time comes that we need temporary foreign workers in the field of construction, I would say pay them accordingly and even potentially pay them higher. That way we're not going to undercut the Canadian apprenticeship system and we're going to ensure that if it is only a temporary issue we're going to solve, that the employers would take care of that. If it's truly nation building, then we're going to get the best of the best from around the world.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Mr. Copeland, you have 30 seconds.

**Peter Copeland:** I would say that we need to rebalance our system toward the promotion of social cohesion, coherent national identity and shared values. To do so, we could explicitly legislate...or through regulation, promote measures to strengthen integration, make various types of residency conditional upon meeting certain metrics, and ensure that we are linking our levels to absorptive capacity, whether that's economic, housing, social services, capacity, language acquisition or civic knowledge.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Mr. Copeland. That's two minutes. Perfect.

Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

I want to thank the witnesses for their excellent testimony and for their great recommendations. We had two great panels today with very important testimony and great recommendations that we're going to talk about next year. Thanks, witnesses.

I'm just going to take one second for committee business.

The clerk distributed a new calendar on Monday. The clerk has written here that we have four meetings, but I think we have three meetings set up. We have one this Thursday and next Tuesday and then the last one. We've determined we will not be sitting on December 11. Do I have that?

We have next week, which is the 2nd and the 4th and then there's the 9th. We have three more sessions left, but not the last one. I hope that's okay with everyone. We will not be sitting on the 11th. Mr. Ma will be disappointed.

I think you all know this. The minister and officials will appear for two hours on December 4 on levels and supplementary estimates.

We do have panels set up for next Tuesday. Please, Conservative team, get in your witnesses ASAP today, so that we can make sure that we add a couple of your witnesses to the panels on Tuesday.

We have the minister next Thursday and then, of course, you'll give us some additional witnesses, hopefully shortly thereafter, so we could get them in for December 9, which is our last meeting.

With that, there's nothing else on our agenda.

I call this meeting adjourned.

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