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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.)): Good morning. It is not another manic Monday. It is just another wonderful Monday, a start to a great week.

I call this meeting to order. Welcome, everyone, to meeting 20 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Today's meeting is being held in a hybrid format, although our first panel is all here, in person. For our second panel, we will have someone join us by video conference.

I remind everyone in the room, including my colleagues, to please use the earpiece and select the desired channel, depending on which language you would like to hear. For those who are speaking, and that includes our questioners, I will let you know when you have one minute left. As always, kindly wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. Of course, please do not speak over each other, as it will be very hard for our amazing translators to translate. It makes their jobs very difficult. Please ensure that all your comments are addressed through the chair. Members on all sides, kindly raise your hand if you wish to speak. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best as we can. I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

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

I would now like to warmly welcome our witnesses for today's meeting. As an individual, we have Michael Barutciski, professor, York University in Toronto. I also want to warmly welcome Steven Paolasini, a regulated Canadian immigration consultant. From the Canadian Council for Refugees, we have Gauri Sreenivasan, the co-executive director.

You'll each have five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed to rounds of questions.

We will begin with Mr. Barutciski, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Michael Barutciski (Professor, York University, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

The topic at hand is polarizing, so it makes me a bit uncomfortable to participate in discussions. I hope that you won't see me as a

person who contributes to this polarization, but rather as a person seeking to find a fair and acceptable balance.

I would like to start by thanking the committee for its work on Bill C-12. Regardless of what happens in the Senate, I believe that the measures proposed won't be enough to address the dilemmas of asylum. I'm glad that the committee is addressing this issue as part of its broader study on the immigration system.

We can't say that Canada's situation is completely different from the situation of its partners, especially its European partners. However, I would like to identify some specific aspects of the Canadian situation in my remarks.

I think that, in general, people are quite confused about the history of the asylum concept. In my opinion, the Roxham Road saga brought this to light. We invented rights that don't really exist. We didn't take the challenge of sharing responsibilities seriously, leaving Quebec virtually on its own to welcome a major influx of people. Moreover, we did a poor job of managing the diplomatic aspect, at the interprovincial level and at the international level, with our American partners.

I'll tell you a bit more about these three issues.

If we want to address the challenges realistically, we must recognize that, under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or under Canadian legislation, asylum seekers aren't automatically entitled to a hearing. For example, the Singh case states that asylum seekers are entitled to a hearing only if they'll be sent back to a dangerous country.

• (1105)

[English]

One consequence of a realistic approach to our actual legal obligations is that the safe third country idea does follow the underlying logic of the 1951 Refugee Convention. It's useful to clarify the norms if we're still receiving relatively high numbers of asylum claims.

Despite the government's suggestion that there will be a 33% drop in the numbers for 2025, we're still dealing with around 115,000 claims. That's still competing with the highest numbers for EU member states. It will probably be more than Germany, a country with twice the population size. Even though Canada has a smaller population than Italy, France and Spain, in 2024 we had more asylum claims than all of those countries. They didn't have as much of a drop over the last year, so we'll see the new numbers soon.

[Translation]

If this type of data is still available, we need to think about another internal issue concerning the division of responsibilities.

Another misconception worth noting is that we can't transfer an asylum seeker to another province without the consent of the person concerned. Yet section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which provides for freedom of movement, doesn't apply to temporary residents such as asylum seekers. The example of Germany shows the need for negotiations among federated entities to ensure the distribution of asylum seekers and the support of host populations.

The negotiation is important not only within the federation, but also with our allies abroad. Clearly, our traditional partners are looking to work together on asylum issues so that they can be addressed extraterritorially.

[English]

If we think that asylum is supposed to provide anyone from anywhere the right to claim protection in any country, then I think we are deluding ourselves. The historical development of treaty law relating to asylum shows that there was never any consensus for such an expansive individual human right that gives migrants the ability to choose the destination country.

Voters in our democracies have always pushed for migration control, so it's not surprising that advocates and academics have, in turn, pushed judges to interpret laws in the most open way possible. I believe we are now reaching the breaking point, and that's why our western European partners have been tightening their rules and exploring extraterritorial mechanisms.

To maintain the balance between compassion and firmness, I think we will have no choice but to harmonize our system with our allies and prepare the legislative groundwork so that this can happen smoothly.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski. You have perfect timing, so thanks so much for that.

Next we're going to hear from Mr. Paolasini.

You have five minutes, please.

Steven J. Paolasini (Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant, As an Individual): Chair and committee members, Canada is deporting data scientists who are working in Canada and who studied at our world-class institutions while importing unem-

ployed insurance agents and line cooks from overseas. The economic class immigration system is no longer driven by economics but by administrative convenience and political quotas.

My name is Steven J. Paolasini. I'm a regulated Canadian immigration consultant, an entrepreneur and a very proud Canadian. I've consulted with thousands seeking to call Canada home and I've watched this system deteriorate in real time.

Take my co-author on this brief, Nino Melikidze, a tech entrepreneur who built Immitracker, the largest international peer-to-peer immigration process tracking platform. The system that granted her PR years ago no longer exists. If she applied today, she wouldn't make the cut. Her spot would go to someone overseas with half her qualifications and none of her Canadian work experience, selected not for economic potential but to hit a linguistic quota that 85% of stakeholders were not in favour of.

Express entry was designed to select those—and I quote from the act—with the “ability to become economically established”. The problem is that the overwhelming majority of candidates already working and studying in Canada outside Quebec don't speak French. To hit this quota, IRCC had no choice but to look overseas and sacrifice human capital and skills selection by extracting candidates with no work experience in Canada, no Canadian education and no job offers—people who've never even paid a dime in taxes here.

Over 80% of those who became permanent residents in the francophone category of express entry in 2024 did not reside in Canada. They were overseas. In 2025, nearly 50% of express entry invitations went to this category, a whopping 48,000 invitations to apply. This is our premier economic selection engine. What are the consequences? Data scientists, skilled tradespeople, entrepreneurs, doctors, researchers, IT managers—you name it—are going home.

We strangely added insurance agents, a sales and service occupation, to the STEM category, while removing 19 actual STEM occupations. We're placing pharmacy counter attendants in the same category as registered nurses and licensed medical lab technologists. We're ranking line cooks alongside Red Seal construction electricians.

We expect applicants who are already here in Canada, who have been working and paying taxes, sometimes for over half a decade, to somewhat impossibly reach over 500 CRS points, but those overseas get a pass at 379, a score even lower than when express entry was introduced more than a decade ago. This is not what merit-based selection looks like.

We're also strangling legitimate innovation. Our only federal business program has an annual quota of just 500 PR spots and somehow within four years accumulated a backlog of 42,000 applications. This is 84 years of inventory.

My friend Mostafa, who is the CTO of PavePal, is a victim of this program. He has eight Canadians on payroll, projects in three countries, dozens of signed MOUs and has raised nearly \$1 million in private investor capital. He's exactly who this program was designed for. It's been over three and a half years since he applied for PR. At this rate, he'll be waiting his entire life.

Here are my recommendations for this committee.

Number one, get serious about restoring merit to express entry. Return to all program draws with a predictable cadence that selects for proven economic potential. Revamp the CRS to be more granular in nature and target managerial, professional and technical occupations.

Number two, increase francophone community immigration through the francophone community immigration pilot only. Stop distorting our premier high-skilled immigration pathway for a strict linguistic goal.

Number three, mandate full transparency in planning. If you're going to increase a one-time economic class measure by 7%, make sure you also disclose to Canadians in the budget that you're going to increase the protected persons measure by 380%. Canadians deserve honest numbers.

Number four, make stakeholder consultations mean something. Stop wasting taxpayer money on consultations only to ignore what Canadians have asked for and what we want and need.

Number five, commence damage control on the start-up visa program. Triage the applicants like Mostafa who are building in Canada and work towards making a program that leading entrepreneurs can help design.

The economic class must actually be economic. Let's build this country to have, once again, the best merit-based immigration system on earth. I'm here and I'm ready to help.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Paolasini.

Our last five minutes go to Ms. Sreenivasan.

Gauri Sreenivasan (Co-Executive Director, Canadian Council for Refugees): Thank you very much.

My name is Gauri Sreenivasan, and I'm co-executive director at the Canadian Council for Refugees.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration for its commitment to this major topic in Canada's immigration system.

[*English*]

CCR, for those of you not familiar with us, is the national voice for over 200 member agencies that work with, from and for refugee communities and migrants across the country. From the work of our members, we have a profound appreciation, perspective and vision for Canada's immigration system—what is precious about it, what is at risk and how it can and must be strengthened to ensure a fair, welcoming and just system that supports a future where all families and people can thrive.

You have said that this panel is to focus on the asylum system, and that is indeed a critical aspect that deserves attention. Let me zoom out first to comment on the wider context, and then I'll come back to the asylum system.

Globally, we are seeing a rise in authoritarianism, xenophobia and hate, whether that's in countries far away like Iran and India or much closer in our neighbour to the south, where ICE's inhumane and violent enforcement practices include abducting people from schools, homes and workplaces, deporting people of all statuses to third countries, where they are at risk of torture and other harms and meeting peaceful protesters, as we have seen, with deadly violence. People in Canada have watched in horror, and in the face of global trends that are narrowing the scope for protection, we are asking how Canada will respond.

The federal government came to power at a moment when Canadians felt vulnerable in the face of political and economic threats from the Trump administration, and our collective instinct was to put our elbows up to defend Canadian values and to forge our own path. The question we must ask ourselves as we look to shape Canada's immigration system, which you as a committee are contributing to is this: What is the Canadian path?

I want to remind everyone that we recently marked the 10th anniversary of Canada's welcoming Syrians fleeing conflict. It was a moment that galvanized the entire country and reminded the world of who we are. We saw it again as Canada responded to the context of Ukraine. We see it now as Canadians watch in horror and wonder how they can help and respond to what's happening in the U.S.

We are still that country, but we must stand up again for those same principles. Instead, we are seeing steps in the opposite direction. We are not stepping up. We are stepping back. I have a few examples.

The private sponsorship of refugees program is being slashed, despite its being one of the most respected, effective and cost-effective programs in the world. Government-assisted refugee numbers are being reduced, even as countries around the world are also doing that. Refugees in Africa continue to face significant longer wait times than others. As well, the groups of five sponsorship pathway has been frozen.

Moreover, the government is looking to pass legislation in Bill C-12 that moves Canada away from human rights standards and norms of procedural fairness for refugee claimants, denying many their right to a hearing if their case is turned down and to an appeal. We look forward to discussion of that bill in the Senate this week.

My point today is to invite us to consider that these decisions greatly misread the capacity and the interest of Canadians to welcome immigrants and refugees. More Canadians support than oppose immigration, and they believe in the positive role of immigrants in Canadian society: 66% versus 20%. CCR research and polling has shown that one in five Canadians wants to be contacted to get involved in welcoming immigrants and refugees into their communities. They are waiting.

The limitations I put before you are not actually public will. They are government policy. However, the policy choices are given cover from dangerous narratives that have taken hold and have been fanned over the past two years by all levels of government and across party lines.

The narratives wrongly blame current pressures on housing and social systems. This is not only false but dangerous and undermines confidence in the immigration and refugee system. It has started to seed doubts, but it has not changed core values. This is a precious consensus whose unravelling has a great price, as we see in the U.S. and Europe.

We're inviting you, as members of Parliament, to recommend the need for a whole-of-country effort to push back against these narratives. We've launched a national public campaign, We're Better Together, to reignite public support for immigration and to remind us—

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Gauri Sreenivasan:—and I invite you to participate in that.

On the asylum system, I want to remind you that Canada receives a tiny fraction, 2%, of asylum seekers worldwide and that we have a system respected worldwide. The safe third country agreement is based on the premise that the U.S. is a safe country for refugees, and the evidence no longer supports that claim.

• (1115)

There is no country. The convention is very clear that people need to cross borders to claim protection, and those are the rights we have to protect. It's about the ability of people to cross a border, ask for protection and have their case heard on its merits. If the case does not have the evidence, they are turned down. The IRB is very good at discerning between yes and no. That is a system we need to protect and support.

I welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sreenivasan.

Thanks to everyone for their remarks.

We'll turn to our first round of questions, which is for six minutes.

First up, we have Mr. Menegakis for six minutes.

Costas Menegakis (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for appearing before us today and for your testimony.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Paolasini.

Mai Trinh, an entrepreneur, was recently on BNN noting that tech start-ups are leaving Canada in favour of doing business in the United States. She said, "Canada is like a really good-looking guy you want to date, but for some reason, he makes it really difficult for you to be with him."

Do you believe the immigration system today enables entrepreneurs to stay in Canada and build businesses?

• (1120)

Steven J. Paolasini: I don't think it does at all.

In my opening remarks, I mentioned a friend of mine, Mostafa. He raised \$1 million in private investor capital. He's doing operations in three different countries. He has signed memorandums of understanding, but he's going to have to wait 84 years to get his PR. Yes, he's in Canada right now on an open work permit, but the challenge is the uncertainty for these applicants. We have, as I said, 500 spots for start-up visa applicants.

I just don't understand how it got so out of hand, with 43,000 in the backlog, according to the minister's transition binder. I just don't understand how that happened. They were asleep at the switch or something.

Costas Menegakis: You've also published letters to the minister regarding processing timelines and inconsistencies.

How would you characterize the current state of IRCC?

Steven J. Paolasini: It's a bit like a lottery. It's a bit random. You never really know what you're going to get. It's certainly not fair. There's no transparency and very limited accountability.

That is my statement on the current state of IRCC.

Costas Menegakis: You've also advocated for a sustainable immigration policy.

Do you believe the Liberal immigration policy over the past few years has been sustainable?

Steven J. Paolasini: No, it has not, particularly in reference to the....

I will say that the reduction in temporary resident numbers has been effective—cutting out the international student fraud and the public-private partnerships with DLIs.

What was concerning was the one-time measure in the budget. They didn't put in the number for protected persons, but they put in the number for students and economic class. It's a much smaller number, 33,000 TR to PR. When you look through the 2024 and 2025 stakeholder consultations and the consultations on express entry, it is obvious what Canadians want. They want to focus on skills. They want to focus on economic class immigration. I believe that's why they left it out of the budget.

Costas Menegakis: For the record, in your view, has the current government's rapid increase in immigration targets outpaced the actual growth of our housing supply and health care infrastructure?

Steven J. Paolasini: I believe the temporary residents did, at some point. As I mentioned, the current government reeled that in, and they reeled in the LMIA fraud, which I have been quite outspoken about over the last couple of years.

In terms of permanent numbers, they are relatively sustainable right now if they go with 380,000 permanent residents per year in the budget—not 455,000 when you include the special one-time measures.

Costas Menegakis: One phenomenon we've seen, certainly in urban areas across the country, and definitely in my riding in the greater Toronto area and in the York region, is youth unemployment. You've spoken about fraudulent labour market impact assessments, or LMIAs.

Can you expand on the impact this has on youth unemployment?

Steven J. Paolasini: What happens is that employers, when they can bring somebody in on a closed work permit based on a low-wage LMIA, basically have a modern-day wage slave who has to show up for work every single day. Otherwise, they're afraid they're not going to get to realize their dream of remaining in Canada. Employers who pay the minimum wage find that these workers are better than Canadians, who have an open work permit, essentially. They can go and work at the next shop, and they're competitive in the market. This has definitely contributed to it.

Like I said, Service Canada has really cracked down on this.

Costas Menegakis: Thank you for your response.

Mr. Barutciski, you have described the current state of immigration as possibly the country's worst public policy failure in a century. Can you elaborate on how the Liberal government's failure specifically destabilized Canada's ability to provide housing and health care?

Michael Barutciski: I don't know if I can help specifically on housing and health care but, in general, there are large numbers. We were just talking about permanent residents, and we were going up towards 500,000, but that's only a small part of the picture.

Right after the pandemic period, there was a huge explosion in various categories of temporary residents. We were never even told about that. We couldn't plan for that. I'm saying that it was two or three times more than permanent residents, and it doesn't make sense to talk about immigration in Canada by focusing on just permanent residents. That's a little, simple point, but it has huge implications, because we're talking about many more immigrants, temporary residents.

● (1125)

Costas Menegakis: You've also argued that letting so many people into the labour market in low-skilled jobs has lowered GDP, so I have a similar question. How does this touch upon youth unemployment?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, please.

Michael Barutciski: What happens if you bring in a lot of temporary residents is that students who then are working.... They're taking the kinds of jobs I would want to have if I were 16, 17 or 18. I'd want to work in a fast food restaurant, as I did. I'd want to do these things. If your competition is a lot of people from poorer countries, as a discussion paper from the Bank of Canada was telling us, poorer countries bring in lots of younger people. They're studying, but they're not really studying—

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski.

Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

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'm going to start with Ms. Sreenivasan.

You've talked a lot about refugees, and I know that your expert work within the Canadian Council for Refugees is very important. You've spoken repeatedly about fairness and dignity for asylum seekers.

I'm just curious if you have any suggestions around settlement services or procedural reforms. How can we ensure that they are proper and robust to help those who are migrating here to land well within Canada and be successful?

Gauri Sreenivasan: Thank you very much for the question.

I've also been engaged a little bit by some of the recent exchanges. I don't know if I'll have an opportunity to offer alternative perspectives.

Your question is really important. In order to ensure that people who are provided protection through the asylum system in Canada are set up for success and not only receive safety but also have what they need to contribute and thrive as full members of our society, our democracy and our economy, there is a lot more that we could do to reflect on building a system for asylum with dignity, as we say.

There have been some critical, helpful first steps made by the Canadian government. We propose that there are at least four other key areas that require reform.

First, we need to establish reception centres to provide orientation, triage and referral services. One has been set up in the Peel region, which is a very promising sign, but it needs to be replicated. There doesn't seem to be a clear follow-up plan. When claimants first arrive, they need information about where services are available and what the requirements are for them.

Second, it's really important to think about a way to create cost-effective models for transitional housing for claimants. We already have the know-how and the solutions in this country. From the non-profit sector, there is a network of at least 35 organizations across the country that already offer short-term and transitional housing for refugee claimants. These programs operate at a fraction of the cost of hotels and homeless shelters. They help claimants find a lawyer, find a job and move on to longer-term housing. Critically,

establishing this kind of interim housing for claimants eases pressures on cities' emergency shelters. With predictable, long-term funding, those models could be successfully scaled up, so we could literally save money and save lives.

The key is to invest in housing and build solutions that will make everyone most secure instead of spending billions to just block people from reaching safety at all and expanding powers for mass deportations.

I will take a moment to say that I think it's really important to reflect that the shortcomings and lack of action to invest in housing in this country—social housing, affordable housing and housing for all Canadians, which are an absolutely critical human right and need—can't be linked to the question of recent immigration fluctuations. There is actually no correlation between the lack, over decades, of investment in housing and changes in immigration levels in moments in time. When immigration levels fell at the time of COVID, we did not see increases in available housing or in investments in housing. Housing responds to policy decisions from government and incentives in the market. It's a kind of scapegoating scenario to link them.

A third critical issue is the one you've named in terms of making claimants eligible for support services that are already offered to all newcomers. We have in Canada a highly developed network of organizations across the country that offer specialized services to new arrivals, but their hands are tied because they're not allowed to serve refugee claimants until they reach protected person status, which was 85% of claimants last year. We're losing the two years when we could be supporting people with the very infrastructure that would help ensure a bright future.

• (1130)

Sameer Zuberi: I want to ask you to also speak, in the last minute and a half, about how this helps with our economic capacity and GDP, and also with the employment or full employability of those individuals who are given permission to work two years later. Could you speak a bit about that, too?

Gauri Sreenivasan: Yes, absolutely.

I'll just say that the last element is legal aid coverage. Access to legal aid coverage is critical for them.

The track record of refugee claimants, when they're provided with support on how to get a work permit and what the options are for where housing is they find housing, get a job and are well on their way to contributing to Canadian society.

When we introduce a gap in the system that prevents their ability, for example, to renew work permits or there is a lack of the support service at the beginning that would have enabled them access to the information about where they find language training or their application for the work permit, that prevents them from becoming full participants in both the economy and society.

When we enable people with the information to get on their way and live full lives, they absolutely perform. That's what we see in the economic data for both immigrants and refugee claimants.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sreenivasan.

Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

[*Translation*]

I'll now give the floor to Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for six minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today.

We have different perspectives, and this makes for a healthy democracy.

Mr. Barutciski, I liked it when you said at the start that this issue was highly polarizing. I agree. As my party's immigration critic since 2021, I've seen that labels are easy to throw around. The idea is to have a healthy discussion, while never forgetting that we're talking about real people who come here, but also about the society that takes them in.

I would just like to address something said recently. Should a country's policy on refugees, refugee status and people in need of protection focus solely on the protection of people, or should it become a government's economic policy?

Michael Barutciski: I believe that you're talking about refugees, asylum seekers.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Yes.

Michael Barutciski: If we want to strike this balance in terms of treatment, respect for the rights of asylum seekers and government interests, I think that we need to look at human rights when it comes to asylum.

The economic aspect is important, of course. However, I think that we need to focus on values and rights. Clearly, we want to treat immigrants with dignity. We need to consider the appropriate balance to avoid destabilizing the country, and how we might go about striking that balance.

I think that it isn't mainly an economic issue.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I heard you talking about distribution. Of course, we're quite interested in this topic in our area. However, we've been told that it isn't possible. Yet you somewhat showed that it was.

What clear legal limits mustn't be crossed to ensure that these transfers comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, if we want to distribute people around?

Michael Barutciski: If possible, of course, it would be good to have people's consent. We would then like to see some logic to the

process. Maybe the francophones will go to Quebec and the anglophones will go to the other provinces.

However, when it comes to obligations, we must recognize that temporary residents don't have the right to freedom of movement under the charter. They can be directed to certain provinces in order to share the burden or responsibilities. Our European partners—and I'm talking here mainly about Germany—will use this system to ensure a balance. Otherwise, we end up with situations—for example, in Quebec, in certain parts of Ontario or in other parts of Canada—where an imbalance occurs and it creates political tension.

Personally, I don't think that there are many constraints involved in distribution.

• (1135)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So this is being done in other places. As you just said, it's being done in Europe, in Germany. Is it being done in other areas? Or only in Germany?

Michael Barutciski: I'm currently studying the German example, so I can talk a bit about that example. However, I know that it's happening in other places too. Asylum seekers don't have the right to decide where they'll stay. I would say that they don't even have the right to apply for asylum in the country of their choice. This isn't part of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

We must protect them, but—

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: With Quebec calling for the protection of its culture, language and social model, these considerations would be legally relevant when it comes to ensuring the equitable geographic distribution of people.

Michael Barutciski: It seems clear that cultural, linguistic, economic and also political interests are at stake. That much is clear.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: There has been a succession of immigration ministers over the past 10 years. There have been many. I've been here since 2021. I've had dealings with five of them, I believe.

We often think that, by changing the captain of a sinking ship, the ship will stop sinking. However, ministers have come and gone. Since 2015, the solution each time seems to have been to inject more funds into the system.

However, we can see that the processing times are increasing in all programs, both for temporary immigration—students, asylum seekers and foreign workers—and for permanent immigration. Injecting additional money clearly isn't the solution.

Michael Barutciski: Indeed, if we look at what has happened since 2015 at the immigration department and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, we can see that the budget has doubled for both and that the number of employees has also doubled. Yet we're left with a big backlog.

The Chair: One minute to go.

Michael Barutciski: Okay.

I think that, clearly, we've provided a great deal of money. There are many resources, many people working on this. Yet we have many cases that we can't manage.

In my opinion, the fact that we have so many people is part of the problem. The bureaucracy can't even process all these claims. I think that this further shows that we've gone with excessively high numbers in several categories. There are other issues as well. Clearly, we have money and employees, but we can't manage them.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: So, if it isn't a lack of funding, what do you think is causing the current issues?

Michael Barutciski: It depends on which category is involved. I think that political choices have been made, but that they may not have been the best choices. We can't control certain aspects, such as asylum seekers, although we do control them as well, indirectly. If we grant visas to countries where many people want to come from, we'll have many claimants.

The idea is to come clean all over the world. We all use visas to control the flow of potential asylum seekers, which has a major impact on asylum claims. I'm not saying that this is a good thing. However, it's the somewhat unspoken side of our international system. This is an example of the impact on the categories. If we decided, a few years ago, to let people from Syria come here without a visa—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

Next we go to our second round, which is five minutes.

To begin our round, we have Mr. Davies.

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

Professor Barutciski, in a recent article, you said:

To the extent that public support depends on sensible control of borders and intake levels, it is difficult to treat migrants in a dignified and humane manner if the local population is not fully onboard with the country's overall immigration policy. To regain public confidence in Canada's immigration system, the first step is to encourage an honest and open public debate. This cannot happen if the government withholds basic information, obfuscates in its public dissemination, or simply does not have essential data.

That's a very interesting statement, but I'm interested specifically in where you think the legislation fell short in fixing the problems you've identified.

Michael Barutciski: With respect to the problem you're referring to, in that report I give recommendations and suggest that the House of Commons should be taking action and forcing the minister, in the annual report, to give more detailed data. If we knew there were certain categories that were starting to increase quite a bit, we could plan much better, and we'd actually be forced to have a discussion on it.

What happened over the last few years, the period of 2022, 2023 and 2024, is there were lots of changes to the system. It wasn't the

permanent residents, so we weren't actually...it wasn't tabled in the annual report. I would suggest—those are my recommendations in that report you're citing—that we modernize the annual reports so there's a lot of data. I would like to see much more so you can have fuller discussions.

We'd be forced to talk about temporary residents. If there's a huge increase, we would know that. We would have known that back in 2023. I wouldn't have had to decipher the various statistics. That's what I had to do, sort of, and I started publishing in *The Globe and Mail* about this strange...all of a sudden we're talking about a million-some people. The minister never mentioned this.

In forcing the minister, and I think this is good for all parties, we would just have more of an open debate so we don't end up two years later with the media catching up, and then we start having the real debate we should have had two years earlier.

It's unfortunate, I would say, that the minister at the time did not talk openly about this. The following minister was more up front, but still we have to come and have good discussions and figure it out. I would say the debates are not the same as they were two or three years ago.

If we talk about a change in public opinion, if we're worried about xenophobia, we have to recognize that something did happen in the last three or four years in Canada, and I don't say “the last year”. Of course, our neighbours to the south have destabilized lots of things around the world, but on this question—

● (1140)

Fred Davies: I have pretty limited time, and I'd like to ask a couple of questions. I'd like to follow up on that.

The Conservatives proposed some key amendments to Bill C-3 that were later withdrawn when it went to report stage in the House, specifically related to transparency, sort of the stuff you're talking about here. That was removed. In the fall budget, the Liberals named 35,000 one-time slots they can allocate for any purpose, including giving permanent residency status to people who have crossed illegally into Canada.

Isn't this a counterproductive measure?

Michael Barutciski: I'm not sure I completely understood, but if you're saying that we don't want transparency on situations involving people....

Fred Davies: Well, it's an allocation of 35,000 people, and we have no real idea of who they are, where they come from, but they can have access to permanent residency, without much transparency.

Do you think that's a good idea?

Michael Barutciski: I'd say of course not.

Fred Davies: You mentioned earlier that rights were created that really didn't exist before.

Can you explain that, please?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Michael Barutciski: If we look very carefully at what the Prime Minister and the government were saying in 2017, they were saying that anybody showing up at the border has a right to a hearing. We were referring to the Roxham Road situation, but in 2024 the Prime Minister said in a YouTube video, in the French version only, that, "Oh, that was actually abused."

We then changed the rules because we don't have an automatic right to claim asylum at the border. There are actually some inadmissibility questions. The refugee convention doesn't give you that right if you're protected in another state. You're supposed to protect refugees, but where they're actually protected is a diplomatic issue, and a whole bunch of other factors come in.

Fred Davies: When you said we need to align ourselves with our partners in the world, is that one of the key sectors you would suggest needs alignment?

Michael Barutciski: Yes, that is what I'm suggesting.

The solutions that our partners—and I'm spending a lot of time with our European partners—and the governments are looking at are different ways to deal with this, hopefully in a humane way. We want to protect the balances, and I agree with what my colleague was saying. We do want to be careful about xenophobic tendencies, but we want to be realistic about it.

I'm saying we went too far on the rights. Our partners are actually quite active on this, and I'm afraid that if we don't start working here much more actively, they'll be innovating different kinds of protection systems and we'll be left behind.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski.

Thank you, Mr. Davies.

Again, this is a study on our immigration system. If you have specific data that you feel should go in the annual report, please make sure to submit that to our committee so we can consider that at report time.

Thank you.

The next five minutes go to Ms. Salma Zahid.

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

Thanks to all the witnesses for appearing before the committee.

My first question is for Madam Sreenivasan.

Thanks a lot for appearing today.

An ENCA article in December said that you "accused Canadian politicians of exploiting 'a global current' surrounding immigration, where newcomers are blamed for a range of challenges, including housing shortages and overstretched healthcare systems." You said, "Canada's population is declining and immigration is essential to our future prosperity," and you warned "against the use of 'toxic

and xenophobic narratives' that can harden attitudes against newcomers."

Could you please expand on that point? What can those who recognize the importance of a managed immigration system do to counter those narratives?

• (1145)

Gauri Sreenivasan: It is essential that we have data-informed and evidence-based information that we share with the Canadian public. We're hearing it even now.

When I speak about the importance of the narrative, the narrative is a story that has to be based on a response that Canadians can understand and based on the evidence of what is happening. There is such a positive and evidence-based story that governments at all levels can tell about the role of immigration in Canada and the functioning system, the skills and the capacity we have in order to maintain Canadians' confidence in the immigration system and the system of asylum.

It's really important on the asylum question to recognize that Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board and Canada's overall asylum system are actually looked to around the world as world-class systems that have developed an evidence-based way to have a quasi-judicial hearing so that all claims are heard on the evidence. The IRB looks carefully at the evidence, and it determines which claims are substantiated and which claims are not.

When we say that people have a fundamental right to claim asylum, that is, in fact, fundamental. With respect to the suggestion that rights have been invented, that kind of language creates an uncertainty and a fear that don't help. The rights are very clear and codified in both the UN convention and the Canadian charter. You have the right, if you cross a border, to ask for protection. You don't have the right to get a "yes", but that is not the system we have. We have a system that establishes the merits of a claim.

It was very clear from the Singh decision that everyone in Canada, including temporary residents if they're in Canada, has a right to speak to the merits of their claim before being deported to potential danger, because officials make mistakes and these are matters of life and death. The Singh decision said you cannot render a “no” decision without a hearing. That is the only right the community and human rights lawyers are defending. It is, in fact, what the Supreme Court has backed. It is, in fact, what the UNHCR testified before this committee is missing in Bill C-12.

The obligation for us to think about is the opportunity to describe for Canadians the places the system can be improved. For example, when we speak about the money, what is the money being thrown around? Could it be spent better? Yes, 100%.

Our member organizations are saying there is an incredibly positive story we can tell that builds on Canadians' values to welcome refugees in terms of how we create the effective infrastructure to welcome them. There are cost-effective solutions to interim housing that take pressure off city shelters and enable refugee claimants to get access to the supports they need to get a job and get on their way with their lives. We can do that by welcoming more people in dignity and enabling them to contribute to Canada, rather than having very expensive emergency systems that don't think about what refugees may need when they come to seek asylum and end up with last-minute measures, such as busing people to different parts of the country or putting them in hotels. We can have a much more cost-effective and dignified system, and then we can tell the story.

My point was to say we can tell Canadians that we can maintain an open country, one that gives people due process at the border, supports people to have dignified lives and be able to contribute and strengthens all Canadians, because we need to respond to their rights as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sreenivasan.

Thank you, Ms. Zahid.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

• (1150)

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wouldn't want to be the analysts here. There really are two completely different opinions on something that I believe should be factual. It's either true or false.

Mr. Barutciski, are people entitled to a hearing? We currently have two different opinions on something that should be easy to understand.

Michael Barutciski: The Singh case concerns seven people of Sikh origin facing deportation to India during the 1980s, at a time of tension. In this situation, it was said that they couldn't be deported without a hearing.

Canadian legislation contains inadmissibility provisions. For example, people may arrive at the border but, for reasons of criminality, they won't even be allowed to seek asylum in this country. Canadian legislation allows for this. The 46 articles of the 1951 Conven-

tion relating to the Status of Refugees don't even mention the word “asylum”. They say nothing about procedures.

So, in the discussion at hand, this is where things get a bit tense. For many years, the legal community and advocates believed that we were offering quite progressive rights. Over the past few years, it has become clear that, in reality, this may have been a bit of an exaggeration and we have a whole host of problems. This discussion has been going on for years. I find it a bit sad to see that part of our community wants to help refugees and says that the standards have been in place for decades.

A number of people have written, as we just said, that individuals are automatically entitled to a hearing. I'm saying that this isn't exactly the case. We can see the issues today. Our colleagues and friends in Europe and other countries are also exploring these issues.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We hear that newcomers can have an impact on health care services and housing, for example. According to some people, this is dangerous rhetoric that targets newcomers. However, isn't this instead a healthy discussion on government policies? These people have nothing to do with government policies and they certainly shouldn't be targeted.

Michael Barutciski: Migrants were being criticized. I hope that the people, the migrants, aren't being criticized.

I've tried to write this in many newspapers. We should be focusing on government policies and criticizing these policies, if necessary. That seems clear to me.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski.

We have seven minutes left in this round, so I'm going to give three and a half minutes to Ms. Rempel Garner and three and a half minutes to Mr. Zuberi.

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

Ms. Sreenivasan, I want to go back to something you said earlier. You claimed that there is “no correlation” between the rapid immigration growth of the last several years and the decrease of Canada's available housing supply. Is that correct?

Gauri Sreenivasan: Yes, more or less.

I think there—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: You think that, even though we had millions of people come in, this had no impact on housing supply or prices in Canada.

Gauri Sreenivasan: I'm saying that the factors that drive the cost of housing and the availability of housing are much more related to the questions of the financialization of housing as an asset, rent control, policies that are—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Just to be clear, you don't think bringing in millions of people in a very short period of time had an impact on housing, even though major economists and most Canadians' lived experiences say otherwise.

I'm just asking from a perspective so that we can qualify your comments in a further report, because that seems a little bananas to me.

Gauri Sreenivasan: I appreciate that there's a sort of natural logic that input supply must have an immediate effect on demand. I am sure that in specific markets there are—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you. That's all I need from you.

With the time I have left, Mr. Barutciski, we will have about three million people, by the end of this year, who have expired or expiring visas. The government has continued to set temporary resident targets, making the assumption that these people will leave. If these people do not leave, as the law requires them to do, should the government continue to accept hundreds of thousands of temporary residents as it has currently outlined in its levels plan?

Michael Barutciski: No, the government shouldn't, and that's why we should be cutting. We don't know what will happen with those three million.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Would it be fair to say that those numbers need to drop to nearly negligible if the government doesn't have a plan to have three million people leave as they should?

Michael Barutciski: I don't know what you mean by negligible or nearly negligible, but they need to drop considerably, so what I recommend—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: If three million people don't leave, how many people should the government be bringing in on temporary resident visas?

Michael Barutciski: A very small number—

• (1155)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: It should be a very small number. I would agree.

Thank you. That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Next we'll go to Mr. Zuberi.

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to continue with Ms. Sreenivasan.

In your initial remarks, you spoke about the We're Better Together campaign. Would you like to elaborate a little on that in the brief time that we have?

Gauri Sreenivasan: Thank you very much.

We feel it's very important to recognize the strong values and commitment that exist in Canada that people are ready and keen to welcome immigrants and refugees, but the polling has shown that they've begun to have doubts. They do have questions about what's happening, and they need a sense of confidence restored. They're also looking for a government and a policy that uphold the traditions that they identify with.

We're looking for a way to enable Canadians who are prepared, willing and ready to welcome refugees and immigrants and who want the government to continue those traditions to signal that. That is the obligation we all have because the more that leaders cast doubts and start to have Canadians question that system, they also move with that narrative.

The opportunity of the We're Better Together campaign is to invite organizations in civil society and members of Parliament to stand up for the values and ideals that we know, whether our families came here last year or 100 years ago, that across languages and cultures in this country we look out for each other and we are a stronger country when we are together. We are a stronger country when we are more diverse. That is the message we want to tell people, because increasingly, many people in Canada are starting to feel not safe and they're questioning choosing Canada or not.

We are deciding the future of the kind of country we want to build. When we see what's happening in the U.S., I think there are many, many people in Canada in our experience in communities across the country who want to stand up and say that we have a different way, where we want to have a system that provides a safe future for all families, refugees, migrants and immigrants. To do that, we have to start sharing those stories and speaking to that.

We're inviting members of Parliament to join the campaign, for organizations to join the campaign, so that we can find solutions together, and tell that story loud and proud so that we maintain the commitment that we will, in the long term, stay an inclusive and strong country.

[*Translation*]

Sameer Zuberi: Mr. Barutciski, I saw your physical demeanour when you heard this testimony.

Do you agree that we need positive accounts of immigrant refugees and that the government plays a role in making this happen?

Michael Barutciski: Absolutely. I completely agree with what my colleague just said. I would simply add that, with this in mind, we want to preserve the system. If there are issues with the system, we must recognize them and try to deal with them.

On that note, I told the other committee member that, in the past, we would have substantially reduced the numbers. The two parties in power in the 1980s drastically reduced the numbers when things got a bit tense. We should go back a bit to this approach and not automatically assume that we'll have plenty. We've had historic numbers. We need to reduce them in order to preserve this typically Canadian cohesiveness and openness. That's a good thing. However, how will we do so? I think that the talking points from ten years ago are no longer useful today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Barutciski.

Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

Witnesses, I want to thank you for your time and for your important contributions to this study. If there's anything that you want to add to your responses or any additional information you want to provide to the committee, please submit it formally, and it will be considered when we are looking at the testimony in preparing our final report.

We're going to suspend for five minutes so the witnesses can leave, and we'll come back for the second panel.

• (1155) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Welcome back.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of our new witnesses.

We have a couple of witnesses joining with us on Zoom. I'm sure that you've run through this already in your test, but just as a reminder, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. At the bottom of your screen, you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation, English or French, or floor. For those in the room, could you make sure that you use your earpiece and select the desired channel. To all, just a reminder to please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I would like to welcome our witnesses for the second panel. As an individual, we have Mr. Lou Janssen Dangzalan, immigration lawyer, who's joining us by video conference. Here in person from C.D. Howe Institute, we have Dr. Parisa Mahboubi, associate director of research. From the Halifax Partnership, via teleconference, we have Wendy Luther, president and chief executive officer.

Each of you will have up to five minutes for opening remarks, after which we will proceed to rounds of questions.

We'll start with Mr. Dangzalan, please.

You have five minutes.

Lou Janssen Dangzalan (Immigration Lawyer, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear today before the members of the committee.

I am appearing in my personal and professional capacity to contribute to your study of Canada's immigration system.

My remarks today will focus on express entry and, more specifically, on category-based selection for francophone candidates.

I want to be clear at the outset: Francophone category-based draws have been a good starting point. They have increased francophone admissions outside Quebec and have produced tangible and measurable results. They have also sent a clear policy signal about the importance of francophone vitality.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, the committee has also heard serious and credible critiques. Some relate to the perceived fairness of the system. Others relate to labour market alignment. Others relate to transparency and predictability within express entry Canada 2025. These critiques shouldn't be dismissed.

I would also like to echo a point raised by many lawyers before this committee. After more than five years of pandemic-related disruption, the system needs stability, predictability and fortified service standards. Rules that keep changing, without clear benchmarks, undermine confidence among applicants, employers and provinces alike.

We aren't looking at a public policy failure. We're looking at a policy that works, but that now reveals its limits. The question isn't whether to abandon francophone draws. The question is how to develop them intelligently, within a more stable and better-governed system.

As a result, I'm proposing a possible next step. Rather than maintaining French as a stand-alone category, it could be more deeply integrated into other priority categories. French would become an enhanced factor when combined with strong human capital.

Currently, for instance, the cap for bilingualism is 50 points. One option would be to increase that cap, for example to 100 points, when French proficiency is combined with a high-demand occupation, such as in health care.

This approach builds on what already works. It preserves the francophone objective. It responds to labour market needs. It reduces perceptions of competition or displacement. It also contributes to system stability, by reducing reliance on ad hoc adjustments.

• (1210)

[English]

This evolution does not require the dismantling of express entry. It can be implemented through a recalibration of point weights. However, it should be accompanied by clear service standards and a commitment to policy stability.

In closing, francophone draws have been a good starting point. Now that the committee has heard the critiques—and there's plenty of that—there's an opportunity to take the next step. By strengthening both the system design and the service standards, Canada can restore confidence and legitimacy in its immigration system when it comes to francophone immigration.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Next, for five minutes, we'll go to Dr. Mahboubi.

Parisa Mahboubi (Associate Director of Research, C.D. Howe Institute): Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important work on immigration levels.

Immigration remains essential to Canada's economic and demographic future, but its benefit depends critically on whether immigration levels align with housing supply, infrastructure, public services and labour market capacity.

Canada faces demographic pressures, an aging population, declining birth rates and a rising old age dependency ratio. However, the C.D. Howe Institute research consistently shows that immigration alone cannot fully address these challenges. Under any reasonable immigration rate, Canada will become both larger and older. Immigration can slow aging, but it cannot prevent it. Treating immigration as a demographic cure risks pushing levels beyond what the economy and housing systems can absorb.

Following the pandemic, Canada experienced an unprecedented surge in population growth driven largely by temporary residents. Year-over-year growth peaked in 2023 at just over 3%, remained elevated in 2024 and then slowed sharply in 2025 as policy changes took effect.

A key message from the C.D. Howe Institute's work on immigration is that immigration level targets should account for both permanent and temporary immigration to ensure that overall levels align with Canada's economic and social capacities. Focusing only on permanent admissions understates the true population impact and leads to systematic under planning.

The consequences of this misalignment are evident. Housing supply has struggled to keep pace with population growth. As a result, the rental vacancy rate fell to 1.5% in 2023, its lowest level since 1988, and rents increased significantly.

C.D. Howe Institute research also highlights the economic risk of rapid population growth without matching investment. Immigration increases total GDP, but when capital investment lags behind population growth, productivity and GDP per capita suffers. These patterns align closely with Canada's recent economic experience.

The temporary resident population has been central to these challenges. Many have concentrated in low-skilled jobs despite high education levels, intensifying competition for entry-level positions and likely contributing to rising youth unemployment. Compounding these are significant shortcomings in how Canada tracks and monitors its temporary resident workforce.

Canada's temporary resident population expanded rapidly through 2024, peaking at over three million before beginning to decline in response to recent policy changes. Even with that decline, the imbalance between temporary residents and permanent admissions remains substantial. The ratio of temporary residents to permanent admissions increased from roughly 3:1 in 2022 to about 7:1 in 2025, placing sustained pressure on the immigration system, including the asylum system, as many seek pathways to permanent residency.

• (1215)

Stabilizing population growth in the short term is critical and managing the non-permanent resident population is necessary to restore balance. Immigration policy must align with absorptive capacities, setting levels that reflect housing supply, infrastructure, investment and health care capacity. This requires a long-term vision that coordinates immigration planning with infrastructure development, workforce participation and capital investment. Composition matter as much as levels. Benefits depend on successful integration and rising standards of living for both newcomers and existing residents, not simply on admission volumes.

Finally, public support for immigration depends on credibility and competence. Canada has historically enjoyed strong support, but that support is not unconditional. When population growth persistently outpaces housing and services, confidence erodes.

To conclude, immigration remains vital to Canada's future, but policy must account for total population growth and absorptive capacity. Getting both levels and selection right is essential to preserving openness and benefiting from immigration.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Mahboubi.

Our final witness will speak for five minutes.

Please go ahead, Ms. Luther.

Wendy Luther (President and Chief Executive Officer, Halifax Partnership): Honourable Chair and esteemed members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Canada's immigration levels. I am grateful for the chance to contribute an economic development lens and an Atlantic Canadian lens to this important conversation.

I'm Wendy Luther, president and CEO of Halifax Partnership, Halifax's public-private economic development organization. To begin, I'll provide a brief history on population growth in Halifax and in Atlantic Canada more broadly.

For decades, Atlantic Canada's economic growth lagged behind that of the rest of the country. In a place full of natural resources, natural beauty and industrious people, how could this be?

Well, according to Don Mills and David Campbell in their 2025 book, *Toward Prosperity: The Transformation of Atlantic Canada's Economy*, our economy's sluggish performance is largely due to slow or no population growth. In fact, the average number of foreign-born Canadians is about 23%. This is four times the average in Atlantic Canada.

To put it another way, from 1971 through 2025, the population growth rate in Atlantic Canada has exceeded the rate for Canada overall in only four years: 1983, 2021, 2022 and 2025. This demographic trend has limited the region's economic dynamism and ability to attract investment, underscoring the critical role that immigration can play in driving prosperity and addressing long-standing challenges.

Over 10 years ago, in 2014, the Ivany report, "Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians", emphasized the critical need to increase Nova Scotia's population to ensure long-term economic sustainability and vitality. The report set a bold target of growing the province's population to one million by 2025. Nova Scotians took these recommendations to heart and we were very proud to reach this milestone goal, reaching a population of one million ahead of target in 2021.

Now that our population was growing, instead of stagnating or shrinking, there was no end to the opportunities we could seize. Existing businesses were expanding and new businesses were choosing to locate in Halifax. Also, our GDP was growing ahead of the Canadian average, while unemployment and youth unemployment remained low.

In 2022, Halifax launched its next economic strategy, "People. Planet. Prosperity." That brings us to 2027, with an ambitious goal to grow our population to 525,000 and our GDP to \$25 billion by 2027.

By 2024, our growth was so fast, up to 4.2%, and undeniably causing some growing pains. We met the moment and addressed these challenges. Our population goal was in sight and our GDP goal was met two years early.

However, recent immigration policy changes put these gains at risk in 2024, when the Government of Canada announced a significant shift in immigration policy and targets. In weeks, Canada fell significantly from its place as a first-choice destination for international students. Recent EduNova data shows that, globally, 38% of

prospective students and applicants said they are reconsidering their study abroad plans in Canada.

On the ground here in Nova Scotia, this means that we have significantly undershot our quotas because of the message that Canada wasn't open for business. Last year's plan for a 20% reduction in Canadian permanent resident targets has led to a 34% reduction in Nova Scotia's permanent residence admissions so far. Although we had made great strides in population growth, it is highly unlikely that natural population growth will make up for our aging population, so we are not out of the woods from our considerable demographic challenges.

Access to talent is key to Halifax's value proposition in attracting and retaining business in our municipality. The strength of our graduates, including our international student graduates, and access to efficient and predictable immigration pathways spur business and investment in Halifax.

● (1220)

In meeting our housing challenges in 2025, there were a record 6,676 housing starts in HRM, and we have to ensure the real estate industry is not thrown into disarray by a rapidly slowing economy. We need consistent, predictable immigration policies in order to ensure a reasonably balanced real estate market.

In an increasingly volatile economic and geopolitical environment, we Canadians need to do everything in our control to add stability, predictability and efficiency into all systems, including ensuring we have an immigration system that meets the needs of business and enhances our global competitiveness.

Halifax is open for business. Predictable and appropriate immigration levels and policies ensure our success.

Thank you for your kind attention. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Luther.

I want to thank all the witnesses for their opening statements.

Now we'll go to our first round of questions, which is for six minutes.

We'll begin with Mr. Redekopp for six minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

I want to start with you, Dr. Mahboubi.

In the previous panel, we had a witness who stated that there was absolutely no connection between the amount of immigration we have and the housing market. Do you agree with that?

Parisa Mahboubi: No, I don't agree. The problem we have in the housing market is a combination of supply and demand. Before recent increases, it was mainly on the supply side because it's been slow and not even consistent with previous population growth.

However, post pandemic, given the significant increase—for example, the population increased by 3%—means that when it comes from immigration, those immigrants all need a place to live. If population growth comes from, for example, the birth rate, for those individuals there is, at least, 18 to 20 years before there's a demand for housing. When the biggest part of population growth comes from immigration, that means the supply side of the housing market needs to be ready to accommodate those individuals.

Also, one thing that is—

Brad Redekopp: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but we have limited time.

I guess the point, which I think you would agree with, is that if you have a large demand, with millions of people coming into the country who all need housing, it's going to have an impact on the availability. That's common sense.

Parisa Mahboubi: Yes, it's sudden.

Brad Redekopp: In the same vein, then, should the number of people we bring into the country be based on the availability of things like housing and jobs?

Parisa Mahboubi: In terms of what we should plan, I stated that, for immigration planning, we need a long-term vision. What does it mean? It means we have to think about the rate we want to maintain consistently over time, and based on the immigration rate and population growth we think Canada needs to have, we are able to project population. We are able to see, for example, that, if today the immigration numbers and rate are going to be this much, this is going to be the future population growth and future numbers for Canada.

Our scenario shows that, if Canada continues to grow, it means we need more services and housing. The goal is to make sure that all government departments, federal and provincial, are aware of that vision and of that target for immigration long term. We need something predictable. We need to make immigration planning sustainable to be able to plan for that, and we need coordination across all levels of government.

• (1225)

Brad Redekopp: As you stated, lately there have been three million people.... The government's policy is to reduce that. They've made some policy changes, but they're making the assumption that when somebody's paperwork expires, they're going to leave the country. Is that the same assumption you make, or do you have any evidence to suggest that might not be true?

Parisa Mahboubi: That's probably not true. Unfortunately, as I mentioned during my opening remarks, the biggest challenge we have is a lack of data about individuals. We don't monitor and track them. We don't know how they are doing, even in terms of labour market activities or whether the visa expires. The population numbers we have from Statistics Canada are based on the assumption that individuals lived here for three months or for a certain time after expiration of their visa.

However, this is—

Brad Redekopp: Do you think that's a reasonable assumption?

Parisa Mahboubi: I don't think that's a reasonable assumption.

Another thing is that many individuals who are not able to renew their work visa or get study permits consider the asylum system. At the same time that we witnessed reforms to temporary immigration, we saw a significant increase in the asylum system, putting pressure on the system. It is possible that people just move from one category to another.

Brad Redekopp: With the whole LMIA system and temporary foreign workers, do you believe that suppresses wages in Canada?

Parisa Mahboubi: I believe that temporary immigration, those temporary foreign workers.... Also, it's not just temporary foreign workers. We also have international students who can work. We have other labour mobility programs that allow individuals to work in Canada. The biggest danger is that, even among those who are highly educated, the over-educated rate is high.

It means they are not working in a position that matches their skills, which means that the supply of labour for lower-skilled jobs is strong. We have a strong labour supply. It creates incentives for employers to not increase wages to address the labour shortages. It also affects capital investment, which is really important for Canada to focus on.

Brad Redekopp: Do you think that's partly why we have such a high unemployment rate among younger people?

Parisa Mahboubi: That's not the only reason. That's one of the factors that can contribute to high youth unemployment, especially when we look at the timing. Even for temporary residents, at the same time that the population increased, their unemployment rate also increased.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mahboubi.

Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

Next, for six minutes, we have Ms. Sodhi.

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

I'll give a huge thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing before the committee today.

My first question is for Mr. Dangzalan.

My riding of Brampton Centre is home to tens of thousands of international students, temporary workers and newcomers to Canada. Over the last few months, my office has received hundreds of phone calls and emails from students who planned their futures around the Ontario immigrant nominee program. I've met with many of these students in my office as well to hear their concerns. To be fair, these programs are expected to be transparent and reliable. Instead, many are now facing uncertainty and instability.

We know that immigration is a shared jurisdiction, with provinces playing a key role through nominee programs and settlement support. You have previously raised concerns about integrity issues in the OINP, while also warning against overly blunt policy responses. From your perspective, how can stronger federal and provincial coordination improve integrity and consistency in nominee programs without undermining access for legitimate workers and businesses?

• (1230)

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: Let's start with the simplest complaint that we typically hear from the provinces when it comes to the supply side of slots for permanent residents. In recent years, we've seen massive fluctuations and a lack of predictability.

Even from the perspective of provinces, we're seeing less predictability in the number of slots that they can actually use for allocating the program priorities in whatever province you're looking at. For example, we know that Ontario typically receives the lion's share of provincial nominee programs, except that in 2025, that tanked. That really crushed a lot of people's dreams.

We understand the considerations in why that happened, but we also have to be mindful of the impact of these policy swings. They have a detrimental effect at the micro level, but also at the structural level, because there is a reputational impact with respect to the Canadian immigration system as a whole.

My last point on this is that Canada has been successful in the past as a preferred immigration destination because we've been seen as transparent and predictable. That has not been the case in the last five years, unfortunately.

Amandeep Sodhi: Our government has constantly emphasized the need to restore stability and balance to the immigration system while maintaining Canada's humanitarian tradition. From your perspective, how can Canada responsibly balance humanitarian commitments with sustainable immigration levels in a way that works for newcomers and host communities alike?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: That is the million-dollar question. Unfortunately, not a lot of thought has been given in the last year, and maybe two years, to how we meet our international commitments.

The traditional pathway has always been seeing it as a proportion of the larger levels plan. What we've been hearing from different sectors, including those who work in humanitarian and refugee sectors, is that family class and humanitarian refugee class applications should not form part of the levels plan at all.

I'm not entirely sure if I agree with this particular position, nor am I against it, but it is certainly a conversation that needs to be had in order for Canada to meet its humanitarian commitments.

Amandeep Sodhi: Would you agree that both these objectives are essential to gaining public confidence in the system?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: Absolutely. As we've seen in probably the last two years, one of the first flanks of the immigration system that was attacked was the perceived breakdown of the refugee system. Then came the demonization of the international students. Having a balanced program on all flanks and all fronts is essential for the Canadian immigration system to retain a sense of credibility and stability.

Amandeep Sodhi: Where do you see the greatest tensions emerging in this practice?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: For at least the next two years, it will be the math problem that we have.

It will be the number of slots for permanent residents and the planning that Canada has to do. It's a question of resource allocation. In this regard, it's a question of how many people we let in.

Amandeep Sodhi: You gave testimony in the Senate about your recommendations to introduce regularization pathways, including transitioning temporary workers to permanent residency in a fair manner. In our budget 2025, the federal government announced a new "TR to PR" policy to do just that. Can you explain why you felt such a policy was needed?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: I believe you're referring to the Senate study that happened about two or three years ago. We were living in very different contexts at the time. I should point that out. I was also representing a different organization. Of course, given our circumstances today, my fellow witnesses here have also pointed out that they agree that this is also a supply-side and demand-side question in terms of public services.

We need to be mindful of all these factors. What I did mean about two to three years ago in that testimony before the Senate was that we have neglected certain types of workers in our economy that we did not deem as essential at the time. Of course, they are essential, but at the same time, we have to be mindful of our absorptive capacities.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Dangzalan, and thank you, Ms. Sodhi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for six minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today. We've already worked with some of them.

Mr. Janssen Dangzalan, you spoke extensively about the predictability of the immigration system. Isn't there a major issue that no one is describing as the main problem, which concerns a butterfly effect in processing times for just about every program? Aren't processing times the main issue in the asylum claim system, considering that these times are completely mind-boggling? Sometimes we're talking about processing times of four or five years. I even know of cases where an asylum claim had been in the system for eight years.

Isn't this an obvious and even fundamental problem with the current system?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: I completely agree with your observation, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

I heard somewhere in the department, unfortunately, that the long processing times affect a mechanism for controlling the addition of files to our system. We need to work on this to make our system reliable and predictable. It's a key pillar for attracting talent, especially when it comes to economic immigration. Basically, we need a system that works. A 10-year processing time for an asylum claim, for example, poses a problem.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Above all, it leads to inhumane situations. I know of a case where, for example, it took six years to process an asylum claim. A couple had settled here, started working, taken up French in Quebec and had children who were born and educated here, and they were denied asylum. If the claim had been processed quickly in the first place, the life that the couple had built here wouldn't have been completely destroyed in one fell swoop.

Isn't this a completely inhumane factor that the government has yet to address, despite the investment, since 2015, of almost double the amount of money available to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration at the time?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: Good question. At the time, there was a way to solve this problem. If an asylum claim were unsuccessful, an asylum seeker could apply for permanent residence based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Now, the person must take a one-year break. In other words, a person must wait one year before being able to submit a new application to IRCC. At this time, there isn't any obvious solution. The system currently lacks predictability.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you.

Ms. Mahboubi, we've talked a great deal about the presumed impact of temporary foreign workers on youth unemployment, for example.

Wouldn't the federal government's implementation of uniform national measures pose a real problem, given that the regional economic characteristics are completely different? Moose Jaw isn't Toronto, Toronto isn't Montreal and Montreal isn't northern Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

For example, I know that my constituency has a shortage of welders. Not enough welders come out of vocational training programs to meet the needs in this field. The unemployment rate for welders in Lac-Saint-Jean is 0%. Despite all this, the federal government insists on taking uniform measures across Canada. Wouldn't this stubbornness, rather than a willingness to listen to the

people who face these issues each day in the different parts of Canada, pose a real problem?

• (1240)

[English]

Parisa Mahboubi: Regarding your question, I'd like to highlight that when it comes to immigration, its benefits and costs are not equally distributed everywhere. Some regions are facing higher pressure when it comes to temporary residents, for example, because a selection is made by both permanent immigrants and temporary residents where they will reside. This is something that we need really to consider, and also with regard to the availability of jobs. Part of the challenge is related to the jobs not being available everywhere and distributed evenly, and immigrants also don't reside evenly everywhere.

To some extent, the governments need to take that into consideration. Some of the programs have more control over where immigrants or temporary residents are going to reside; for some programs, that's not true. Also—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mahboubi. I'm sorry, but we've gone way over time. Perhaps you can continue in the next round.

That's the first round of questions completed.

We will move to the second round, which is for five minutes.

We'll start with Mr. Menegakis for five minutes, please.

Costas Menegakis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for appearing before us today.

My first question is for you, Dr. Mahboubi.

You wrote just a few months ago:

Canada's immigration policy has lost its way. Once a model for attracting skilled newcomers who drove growth and innovation, the system is now consumed with chasing numeric targets and competing objectives.

The result is a complex web of programs that undermine wage growth, discourage productivity investment and erode public confidence in immigration itself.

You suggested, "A course correction is urgently needed." Can you elaborate on that a little bit for us, please?

Parisa Mahboubi: Yes, absolutely.

Even though I suggested today that we need to manage the number of immigrants and population growth, which is something that the government has started doing by reducing immigration numbers, which I support, how we do it is more important than just focusing on the numbers we are admitting. The quality of immigrants, and even of temporary residents and international students, we admit is critical for the future of Canada, our economy today and tomorrow, not only for the existing population, but even for newcomers and those individuals to benefit from their immigration and to contribute to our economy.

While we need to manage the number of temporary residents and to make sure that we are able to support newcomers, at the same time, we can also benefit from those arrivals and need to make sure that we focus on selection that really matters. We need to focus on individuals who, first of all, are not going to discourage employers from making capital investments by substituting them for it, that is, to go for cheap labour and maintain low wages just because there is a labour supply to address their challenges.

Costas Menegakis: On labour, youth unemployment is at nearly all-time highs, particularly in the greater Toronto area, York Region, Richmond Hill and Aurora, which are areas that I represent here.

After graduating from university, students can't find jobs right now. What role has the temporary foreign worker program played in this, in your opinion?

Parisa Mahboubi: Immigrants and temporary residents with experience are facing challenges in the labour market. It often means they are not able to find jobs that match their experience and education. They are competing with new graduates for the types of jobs available to these two groups. That's one of the reasons that they contribute to higher competition for these types of jobs available for youth; immigrants also have to start from somewhere to be able to start their career and be able to contribute to the labour market.

The problem is that we are not able to integrate those immigrants with experience or higher education well into the labour market.

• (1245)

Costas Menegakis: You also noted in December 2025 that the government's so-called trim targets for permanent residents don't count one-time initiatives that will add tens of thousands more.

How frustrating has that lack of accountability and transparency been in the disclosure of our immigration numbers?

Parisa Mahboubi: This is something that affects public confidence. The government announced a specific headline. The headline numbers are different from when we look at other aspects and other parts of the immigration plan, and you see the actual numbers are higher.

The justification might be that those individuals are already in Canada, and we are basically just moving them from one category to another, such as from the temporary resident category to the permanent resident category. That is still a problem because, for many years, our immigration targets included both those already in Canada and those new arrivals, and these all matter for economic planning.

Costas Menegakis: [*Inaudible—Editor*] why set immigration targets that Canada can't meet. In it, you noted that the temporary resident population continued to climb, even though new targets were announced.

Is this another example of the government over-promising and under-delivering?

Parisa Mahboubi: Absolutely. It's mainly related to temporary immigration, because we want to reduce that. The government has started doing that by imposing different policy solutions. However, we didn't see that in the data because individuals want to stay and

they use different ways to not leave the country. This is something the government didn't see coming.

Costas Menegakis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mahboubi.

Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Next, we have five minutes for Mr. Fragiskatos.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Luther, I'll begin with you.

Can you tell us about the shortages or the labour challenges that exist in the economy in Atlantic Canada? I know Atlantic Canada is a big generalization and direction to point you in, but how does the immigration system help secure that challenge?

Wendy Luther: For many decades, our policy-makers here in Atlantic Canada were worried about having too many people and not enough jobs. Now we have flipped that on its head, and we have more jobs available than we have people to fill them.

Building on the last speaker's comments, in terms of our non-permanent residents in the last 12 months, our number from the year before flipped negative to -775 humans from the year before. We've been disproportionately affected by the impacts of the policy changes.

As we look ahead to huge economic opportunities for our city and our region, at the top of the list is defence. We have Canada's largest navy here in Halifax, and many very exciting opportunities to build our economy on the horizon.

The biggest question about whether we're going to be able to deliver on that is going to be...we have to make sure that we can demonstrate to the Government of Canada that we have the ready and trained workforce to meet those needs. It's not so much that we would have immigrants fill those defence-related positions, but there are other sectors, including building new hospitals, which we have under way, our municipal infrastructure and engineering firms. There will be a very large sucking sound to be able to accommodate the workers needed to grow our defence sector alone, let alone renewable energy, ocean technologies, life sciences and other sectors where we're becoming increasingly competitive.

Our workforce continues to grow year over year, and our unemployment remains low, based on the past immigration levels we were experiencing.

Peter Fragiskatos: I'll be quite specific. Could you speak about the temporary foreign worker program in relation to food processing, a sector that is absolutely vital to Atlantic Canada's present and future? In a previous meeting, I talked about fish processing plants. Constantly, I hear from colleagues from Atlantic Canada, MPs there who represent ridings where those plants exist. The problem is not filling the orders. The problem is getting the workers to carry out the orders.

How important is a program like the temporary foreign worker program within that context?

• (1250)

Wendy Luther: You're exactly right. These businesses cannot operate without access to labour, and the labour that has been available over the last many years is labour that comes through temporary foreign workers.

I urge government, as it changes policy, to speak to businesses. It will be very different from region to region. Speak to municipalities and speak to provincial governments.

We have businesses here in our region that are not viable anymore if they don't have access to the workforce to which they have become accustomed. They're in rural environments. They're not taking jobs from other Canadians. There are just no people to work in those operations here, locally.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

Ms. Mahboubi, let me ask you a question. I only have about a minute and a half, so we'll possibly have to follow up off-line.

I'm quite interested in the points that you've made about housing and health care, ensuring that services—not limited to those, obviously, but those would be top of mind.... How can the immigration system and current and future policy be aligned so that we have harmonization in place and so that the system is not overwhelmed? Do you have a clear recommendation on that?

You've given us some points, but what ultimately has to happen for that kind of change to be put in place and for it to be lasting and effective?

Parisa Mahboubi: To make sure we have a balance between the arrival of those immigrants, providing those services and making sure that the housing market can address the needs of the population and immigrants, long-term planning is really important.

If we know, for example, that the immigration rate and population growth are going to be x numbers.... Let's say they're, for example, the pre-pandemic rates, something stable and long term. Let's focus, for example, on 9% of the population. The C.D. Howe Institute immigration targets council recommended somewhere between 0.7% to 0.9% for immigration rates. However, as I mentioned, we have to consider both permanent and temporary immigration when we do this planning. When we know that the immigration rate is going to be a certain rate long term, we are able to address that.

One thing I want to highlight is that to address some of those challenges related to, for example, housing and health care, we also need immigrants—

The Chair: I'm so sorry, Ms. Mahboubi. We are at the end of the member's time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank the witnesses from these wonderful discussion groups. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with these two panels of experts.

Mr. Janssen Dangzalan, I would like to hear your comments on the reputation of the immigration system outside Canada. Have the various decisions made, which seem to send an inconsistent message to the world about how newcomers should go about immigrating here, affected the reputation of the immigration system?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: First, I would like to point out that a formal study is needed to establish the nuances of Canada's reputation abroad.

That said, potential clients, meaning people outside the country, are telling me that Canada has developed a reputation as an unpredictable country in terms of immigration. These people are turning to other options, such as Europe, Australia or New Zealand. As a result, they turn away from Canada, and Canada loses out on opportunities to absorb, so to speak, this talent into its economy. Ultimately, it's a shame.

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: What do you think is behind this impact on Canada's reputation? Is it the result of the government's sometimes inconsistent messaging over the past few years? Do you think that this is the reason?

• (1255)

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: Exactly. Canadian governments have been inconsistent in their messaging over the years. They say that Canada is open, but sometimes they suddenly close the doors. This poses a problem for attracting skilled talent, even in sectors that require workers, such as the agricultural industry. This is crucial for stability.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Thank you, Mr. Janssen Dangzalan.

[*English*]

We have two minutes left for Mr. Redekopp and two minutes left for Ms. Sodhi.

Mr. Redekopp, you have two minutes.

Brad Redekopp: Thank you.

Mr. Dangzalan, in Saskatchewan we have a very vibrant French community. There are many small communities around the province that have really strong French roots. It is also a very small community in Saskatchewan. A very small percentage of the population is francophone in Saskatchewan.

I've heard from immigration consultants that if you want to get a temporary foreign worker in Saskatchewan right now, what you do is make sure they speak French. As a result, most of the TFWs coming to Saskatchewan now speak French.

Do you think that's an effective policy?

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: I believe the consultants you've spoken to are referring to the francophone mobility work permit program, which was expanded to include TEERs 4 and 5 for lower-skilled workers.

It basically encompasses all levels so that if you have a certain level of French, which is five out of 10, you are exempt from the usual labour market impact assessment requirement, which is a boon for a lot of communities that are in need of bilingual workers, especially those with French as their first language, for example.

It is effective—

Brad Redekopp: My core question, though, is whether that is an effective policy, in your opinion.

Lou Janssen Dangzalan: Time will tell. The expansion only happened about three or four years ago, if memory serves me right. I don't think StatsCan has done a detailed longitudinal study on this, but it has been an effective pathway for a lot of people.

From a perspective of attracting francophone talent to our country and to Saskatchewan in particular, I'd imagine it's been effective in order to get around the current suspension on LMIA processing.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Mr. Redekopp.

Thank you, Mr. Dangzalan.

We have two minutes for Ms. Sodhi.

Amandeep Sodhi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In the time that I have, I'd like to direct my question to Ms. Mahboubi.

I want to give you the opportunity to continue your answer to my colleague Mr. Fragiskatos' questioning about how the immigration system and other integral systems can be aligned. What further recommendations do you have?

Parisa Mahboubi: To make sure that immigration aligns with other aspects of our economy and society, first of all, I highly rec-

ommend that we improve our selection system to be able to select top talent so all Canadians and all immigrants can benefit from our immigration system. For example, right now we have category-based selection that focuses on a smaller pool of candidates and reduces the cut-off score. We need to think about what to do with that.

In terms of temporary residents and international students, although we significantly increased their numbers, what we didn't think about was what type of temporary residents and international students we need. It shouldn't be just about announcing a cap on international students. We have to also think about whether there are some top candidates or great students outside Canada: If they are interested in studying in Canada, we shouldn't prevent them from doing so. We also have to think about the long-term path to permanent residency.

We need to reform our immigration system's permanent immigration selection system to focus on top candidates, and we need to reform the way we select temporary residents, either international students or foreign workers.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Ms. Mahboubi.

Thank you so much, Ms. Sodhi.

To any of our witnesses today, if there's anything more you want to submit, please feel free to follow up and formally submit it, and it will be considered as part of our study.

Thank you for your important contributions today. Thank you for answering our questions. I also want to thank members for their excellent questions.

Before we go, I don't know if you've noticed, but one of our analysts, Philippe Gagnon, is on paternity leave. In addition to our wonderful analyst Andrea Garland, Valérie Chevrier-Marineau has joined us.

I want to say a warm welcome to you.

Thanks to everyone for their contributions.

We are now adjourned.

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