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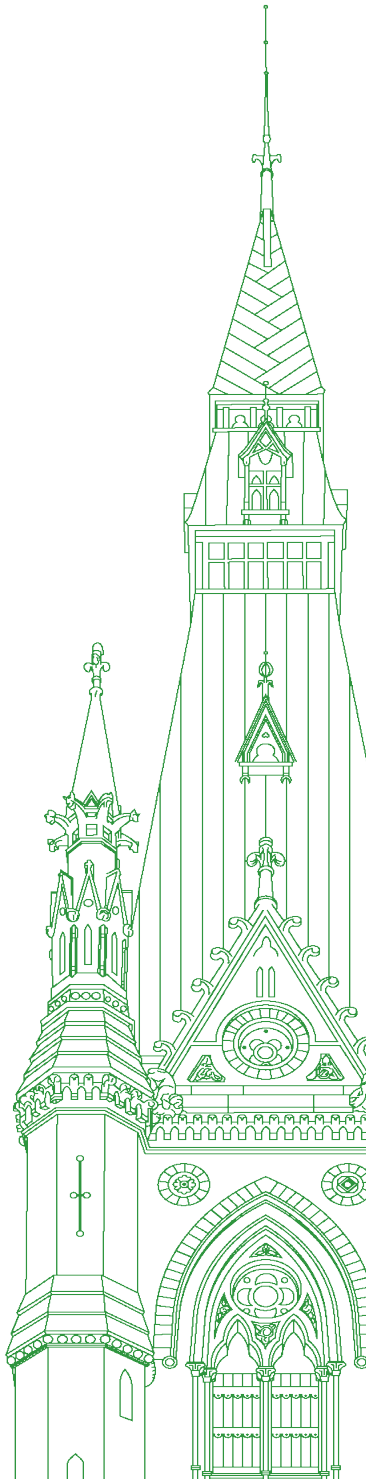
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Chair: Julie Dzerowicz

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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● (1535)

[*English*]

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

Good afternoon, everyone. I extend a warm welcome to you at meeting number 42 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. Today's meeting is televised and taking place in a hybrid format.

Before I introduce the great witnesses for our first panel, I want to inform the committee about some things. I have a couple of quick announcements.

In terms of our current study on global talent, we have one additional session, which is next Thursday. We have a list of witnesses already, but if there are specific witnesses you would like to see at that panel, please feel free to make sure our clerk is alerted to that as soon as possible.

The second announcement has to do with the study of immigration systems in M5 and G7 countries. I know some of you have already submitted some witnesses. Thank you so much. We still have room for some additional witnesses. I'd also say to you, because this deals with M5 and G7 countries, that we may want a bit of a strategy for how we want to proceed in terms of whether we look at certain countries. We may want a bit of an off-line discussion around that. I want to encourage that so we can provide a little more of a framework for how we're going to proceed with the meetings ahead.

With that, it is my absolute pleasure to introduce the witnesses for our first panel for our current study on attracting and empowering global talent to strengthen Canada's economy.

We have two witnesses. From Canada's Semiconductor Council, we have Karen Bozynski, director of partnerships. From Dishon Limited, we have Nicole Ralli, vice-president of operations, who's joining us by video conference.

You'll each be given five minutes for introductory remarks, after which we will follow with rounds of questions.

Ms. Bozynski, we will start with you. You have five minutes.

Karen Bozynski (Director of Partnerships, Canada's Semiconductor Council): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of this committee.

My name is Karen Bozynski. I'm the director of partnerships for Canada's Semiconductor Council and a professional engineer.

Canada's Semiconductor Council is the national voice for the semiconductor industry in Canada, which builds and tests the chips inside everything from AI data centres to the cars you drive. The semiconductor industry contributes over $16 billion to Canada's GDP, according to Stats Canada, and enables tens of thousands of high-paying jobs across the country that create more skilled Canadians around them. These semiconductor jobs contribute to Canada's skill set to design and own our own sovereign future.

One international hire creates over five jobs for Canadians around them, and an international hire also contributes over $1 million to Canada's GDP. That's for each international hire, and I've checked this with our members across Canada. Therefore, we can create more jobs for Canadians, more economic impact to Canada's GDP and alignment for Canada's sovereignty in a strategic global ecosystem.

Semiconductor companies choose Canada for our talent, but we're hearing of challenges compromising growth and our ability to create those thousands more jobs.

The first challenge is access to talent. We need to recruit specific international talent where the required expertise cannot be secured in Canada. Structurally, there's a generational void. After Nortel, semiconductor jobs in Canada shrunk for nearly 10 years, and universities cut the programs that fed the industry. Today, we have excellent near-retirement engineers and excellent new grads, but too few mid-career engineers to lead and mentor the Canadian grads and succeed those retirees.

Canadian semiconductor companies are growing at a rate of 20% to 25% per year. We need even more engineers with that five- to 15-year experience to support that growth. We also lack enough Canadians with master's and Ph.D. degrees for specialized research roles where Canada leads the G7 and where export controls and intellectual property rules require Canadian citizens or permanent residents on those teams.

The second challenge is retention. Work permits are expiring before permanent residency can be secured. Canada is losing the skilled people it has invested in and trained and, now, that training is lost to another country that benefits. Additional GDP through additional projects and investment could be secured in Canada if companies could more reliably obtain and retain the specialized engineering talent required to deliver them.

Currently, projects can be delayed, scaled back or awarded to other countries because critical skills cannot be secured under the programs we have today. This is costing us entire teams' worth of Canadian jobs and is losing the opportunity ahead of us to win this critical additional GDP in upcoming projects that we could win if we could secure these skills.

I bring four recommendations from the semiconductor industry leaders across Canada: further express entry reforms that build on the great announcement last week by the minister; faster processing; recognizing graduate student work experience towards permanent residency; and changing the prevailing wage to experience-based ranges per NOC code. Please ask me, through questions, to elaborate on these four recommendations.

Why support these recommendations? Retaining Canada's semiconductor talent strengthens Canada's technical sovereignty, economic security and supply chain resilience. Maintaining domestic capabilities in engineering skills reduces Canada's dependence on decisions and capabilities outside of Canada.

Canada is competing globally for people and projects. Immigration policy directly shapes Canada's competitiveness in where advanced R and D is going to be located and invested in. This builds economic prosperity and the skill sets we need for Canada's sovereignty.

We're asking Canada to keep the talent it already has trained. Let senior hires build a Canadian team around them, rather than abroad. That's how we will create jobs for Canadians and own more of our technical future so that no one can turn Canada off.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

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

Next we have Ms. Ralli, who is coming to us by video conference.

You have five minutes.

Nicole Ralli (Vice-President, Operations, Dishon Limited): Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable members.

My name is Nicole Ralli, and I'm the VP of operations for Dishon Limited.

Dishon is a medium-sized organization with just shy of 200 employees. We are a high-precision machine shop based out of Vaughan, Ontario. We have over 80 CNC machines, spanning three different sites across approximately 120,000 square feet. Our flagship product lines are complex machine components in very hard-to-cut metals with extreme tolerances that are predominantly used in propulsion systems in rocketry applications.

Despite working with the local recruiters and colleges to prioritize the hiring of permanent residents and citizens, this remains the single most significant challenge for Dishon's continued growth. Currently, out of our 200 employees, more than 20% are holders of temporary work permits. Within this group of employees, 60% would be considered skilled trades labour, and 40% are low-skill labour.

The biggest challenge that Dishon faces today is in the group of skilled trades labour. Most of this demographic are young, recent graduates. They come to Canada to receive an international education at a skilled trades school. Along the way, they apply for permanent residence and receive short-term work permits. Dishon hires these bright and eager young graduates, and invests significant time and resources in their training and upskilling.

Unfortunately, as these are entry-level CNC machinist positions, the associated salary, as well as Dishon's physical location, often makes the OINP route out of reach for them, and PRs are not being granted. Most are returning to their native country, where the skills that they have been educated in and trained in here in Canada are of no use.

Whilst I understand the intent of this study is to examine how we attract and empower global talent to strengthen Canada's economy, my main interest in attending and witnessing is understanding how we also marry this with keeping the talent that we already have here. There needs to be a better way to keep talent that has been educated and trained in Canada here in Canada, continuing to support our economy.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions and look forward to contributing.

● (1540)

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

Both of you have done a wonderful job of giving very quick comments. They were excellent.

We are now going to begin with our rounds of questions. Our first round of questions begins at six minutes.

First up, we have Mr. Redekopp.

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

Thank you to our two witnesses for being here today. This is great.

I want to start by reading a message I received today, which I think is interesting. It's from a friend of mine in the GTA. This is what he said. There is a massive layoff in all of the banks. In fact, he's impacted. The main reason is that AI agents are taking over. There is an AI agent for mortgages. There is an AI agent for financial, and an AI agent for doing audits.

He wants to know how come these “crazy liberals”—I'm sorry—are calling for mass immigration. He said that we would be going downhill. Kids are jobless. A degree has no worth. Why would someone with a degree take a job at this level? His message keeps going on.

I'll leave the Liberals to answer the question that he asked there, but my question to you, Ms. Bozynski, is this: AI is becoming ubiquitous these days. My son works in your industry, in Saskatoon, actually. There's a real fear that AI will put jobs at risk, as evidenced by my friend's text today. As your companies begin to integrate AI into your operations, what are the dangers of AI that you're concerned about?

Karen Bozynski: Thank you for the question.

I think we have a real opportunity to look at the opportunities that AI can bring and how Canada can play a role globally in making an impact that actually benefits Canada.

In the case of the question you asked, really, a tool for business process re-engineering is different from enabling the hardware across Canada, where the designers are developing chips that actually go into defence products, space products and communication products. We have a lot of strengths in Canada to build products, and some of those sensors use AI.

AI has many uses. I can't comment on business process re-engineering in a different industry, but what I can say is this. Where Canada can make an impact on owning Canada's sovereignty for engineering, controlling the design and benefiting from the economic impact of where semiconductors can be used across many industries, there's an opportunity for Canada to take the lead. To lead means the ability to make decisions on how we can best impact the design for the hardware to be most effective, efficient and energy-efficient. I think it's a little different from how the actual AI would be used in industry.

● (1545)

Brad Redekopp: We often hear stories of malicious AI agents, some domestic and some sponsored by foreign governments. These are hacking into websites, including the Government of Canada website. Many of them were shut down yesterday as a precaution. We also know that foreign interference is alive and well in Canada.

I want to talk to my colleagues for a moment about the anonymous submissions the committee has been receiving of late.

I don't know about you, but I normally ignore anonymous correspondence. In light of the active AI agents that we're starting to see and, potentially, the foreign interference, I think that we, as a committee, need to be very careful. It's possible that our committee could be unduly influenced by submissions that have no authors. We don't really know where they're coming from.

With these thoughts in mind, I want to quickly move the following motion:

> That, given the government's inability to regularly identify AI agents and the possibility of foreign interference using AI, the committee instruct the clerk that any anonymous submissions to the committee not be circulated to members or be considered by the committee.

I'm not trying to waste a bunch of time here today, but I don't want to see anonymous submissions potentially being taken into account by analysts when writing reports. I would assume that most of us don't even look at anonymous things. I would like to take a moment to go through that. As I said, I don't want to take up a lot of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp. I think this is just a notice of motion.

Mr. Fragiskatos—

Brad Redekopp: No, I moved it.

The Chair: Okay, you've moved it.

Go ahead, Mr. Fragiskatos.

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

I want to hear what the witnesses have to offer. This does not take away from the substance or merit of what our colleague has proposed, but I also think it's a House administration issue. If one committee does this, I would assume that other committees should have the opportunity to follow suit. We should discuss it further at a later point in time—sooner rather than later.

With that, Madam Chair, I move that we adjourn debate on the motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

As there are no other speakers on my list, we will adjourn debate.

Peter Fragiskatos: We have to go to a vote.

The Chair: Let's go to a vote, then.

Are you guys all opposed? Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deschênes, do you have anything to say?

Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Listuguj, BQ): I just wanted to see the motion.

[*English*]

Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Chair, I moved that we adjourn debate. By definition, we go to a vote.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Clerk, we'll go to a vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We are adjourning debate.

Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Thank you, Mr. Redekopp and Mr. Fragiskatos.

Hold on a second. I'm going to say something.

I have raised this as an issue a number of times with the current clerk and the previous clerk. Who are these anonymous people? We don't have tons of them. I've asked whether our analysts look into them. I've already written a formal letter to the Liaison Committee to look at this issue for all committees, as Mr. Fragiskatos previously mentioned. It is being considered at next week's Liaison Committee. It is being distributed to all members. I was notified of it today. I've been raising this as an issue for a while. Kindly know that I have been very much looking at who these anonymous people are in all the studies that, at least, have been part of our committee.

I have been fearful of exactly what you raised today, Mr. Redekopp. I don't want you to believe this hasn't been something brought to the attention not only of the clerks here but also of the main Liaison Committee for all the committees. Again, there's a formal letter. I put it in on July 17 of this year. It is being considered at a meeting next Wednesday.

With that, I'd like to return to the witnesses, if that's okay.

Brad Redekopp: Did I go over the time?

The Chair: Actually, you've lost your time. I'm going to—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): He would still have time.

● (1550)

The Chair: No, we're at six minutes and 45 seconds.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I have a point of order.

According to the Standing Orders, the amount of time that he has is cut off when he starts the motion, so it would go back to him.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but his time was over.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: No, it's not over. How it works, Madam Chair, is that when he moves the motion, the time goes to the debate and then it goes back to the order of this. The time would have stopped at about two minutes and 30 seconds, when he moved his motion.

The Chair: I have the clerk, who takes my time, and we're past it, but let me confirm with the clerk.

The clerk has told me the time continues to run if you choose to introduce a motion in that time.

You have run the clock on your time, Mr. Redekopp.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I would like to challenge the chair. Are you ruling on this? That is not my understanding of procedure.

The Chair: Based on what the clerk has indicated, yes, that is my ruling.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I challenge the chair on this ruling.

The Chair: You've challenged the chair. Now we will go—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'd like a recorded division, since there was some confusion about that before.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We are now going to continue with the questions, and we'll go for six minutes to Mr. Chang.

Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): On a point of order, very briefly, should we have even voted on that question? Given that this is a procedural matter, is it not written in black and white on this particular question?

We're taking away time for witnesses. We can do this later on, but I'm curious about that.

The Chair: Can we leave it for the last five minutes of our meeting today?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: On a point of order, why would we take five minutes to explain basic procedure to somebody who's been in the House of Commons for 10 years?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

I'm now going to give six minutes—

Sameer Zuberi: On a point of order, I have not been in the House of Commons for 10 years—

The Chair: That's not a point of order. This is now debate.

Sameer Zuberi: Don't make up numbers.

The Chair: Please, we are now going to six minutes for Mr. Chang.

Thank you.

Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Bozynski, welcome to committee. My riding of Burnaby Central is a major semiconductor hub in Canada. We have SFU and BCIT.

Canada has great universities and very wonderful engineering programs, but the semiconductor industry needs very specialized skills. Where are we falling short right now, and how could immigration help address the shortage?

Karen Bozynski: This actually ties in with Mr. Redekopp's question earlier, which I think I may have misunderstood. I'd like to answer both questions through this.

Canada benefits from having additional graduate students in the master's and Ph.D. programs, because Canada is extremely well respected and has great research capabilities. We're leading the G7. In fact, both stimulating Canadian citizens to pursue master's and Ph.D. programs and welcoming international graduates into those programs can benefit us. We would welcome opportunities for anyone who regrettably finds themselves affected to be able to see if they can pursue a new opportunity with a master's or a Ph.D. to upskill and join the semiconductor industry with the great growth ahead of it.

In fact, the hiring of additional Canadians around these new graduates, like I said, brings significant economic impacts to Canada. In the universities, there's a brand new program that the federal government has introduced called TICAN, or talent innovation Canada, which I think is being well utilized at universities in order to bring about the opportunities for master's and Ph.D. students to work and apply their research directly to industry. That strengthens the semiconductor industry, but it also gives them very important work experience through the process, which makes them even more valuable. That applies to Canadian citizens and permanent residents, as well as international hires.

We very much welcome such programs and the continuation of such programs.

● (1555)

Wade Chang: If you could ask the federal government to make only two changes to help Canada attract and retain talent, what would they be? How would those changes help Canadian companies grow and strengthen Canada's economic resilience as we diversify our trade relations?

Karen Bozynski: As we mentioned, some of the changes we're recommending are.... For the semiconductor industry, one of the gaps is around the five- to 15-year experience level. The current age-related point scoring penalizes anyone over the age of 30. It could be a simple change that doesn't penalize some of these great candidates with the five- to 15-years experience level. That puts them over that barrier of age 30. That is one very tangible and easy change that would benefit the semiconductor industry.

Prioritizing the semiconductor industry in draws would also be a benefit, because we bring the economic impact, and semiconductors are needed across tier-one occupations. Even though last Friday's announcement removed the requirement for an LMIA, or labour market impact assessment, where there could be a voluntary LMIA to indicate that there is a gap in Canada, perhaps there could be additional points awarded for that.

Right now, things need to be faster. We heard in a previous meeting that I reviewed, in June, I believe, that two to four weeks would be the goal for work permit processing. Our companies are saying they depend on fast processing. They're currently waiting for six, eight or nine months for a work permit. They're losing the opportunity to execute a project that could bring not only economic impact to Canada but also the ability to hire more Canadians around them to deliver a project. They can't do that if they can't get a work permit for one of the critical hires. Expediting that so it's two to four weeks, as was suggested earlier in these committee meetings in June, would be ideal, as would strengthening graduate students' employment in permanent residency. Applying graduate students' work to the permanent residency application would be another great opportunity.

There's also an experience-based wage for the NOC codes that would be beneficial. The prevailing wage has just a midpoint, but it includes anyone who's brand new or 20 years higher in one single NOC code. We have to recognize that salaries would be different for people with different experiences, so we'd recommend experience-based ranges for NOC codes.

Wade Chang: When a company needs to bring a highly specialized engineer to Canada, are our immigration programs helping us compete, or are there any barriers that make it harder to attract that person to Canada?

Karen Bozynski: I'm sorry. Could you say that one more time?

Wade Chang: Are our immigration programs helping us compete globally in terms of attraction?

Karen Bozynski: Because we are competing globally for talent, the faster we can process, the more reassurance we can give that things like graduate students' work experience could be applied to permanent residency, and the clearer and more transparent the path to permanent residency...this would signal internationally that Canada is open for business and to welcome this talent into Canada, so that we can win on so many levels.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chang.

Thank you, Ms. Bozynski.

[*Translation*]

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

Alexis Deschênes: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Bozynski, you just said something interesting about the processing times for renewing temporary foreign worker permits. Did you say it takes around nine months to renew a temporary work permit?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: My understanding, from our semiconductor industry members, is that when they apply for work permits, it would be preferred—and we would recommend—that they receive work permits within two to four weeks, which I believe one of the witnesses at this committee in June indicated. However, the experience we're hearing from our members is that applying for a work permit could take six, eight or nine months. I wanted to convey what they have said to us.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Are we talking about obtaining a new work permit as well as renewing a work permit?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: My understanding is that the example given to me was for a new work permit. That's what I was hearing from our members.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: How does it affect people when they have to wait so long for a response?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: It affects people when they're applying for a work permit. First of all, the employers cannot confidently accept new business from major technical partners that could bring significant economic benefits to Canada. The employers don't have the confidence, and the individuals can't plan where they and their family are going to be.

Expediting this and reducing that time will obviously be of great benefit for both the individuals applying for the work permit and the employers and the team around them that are waiting with bated breath to know that, in fact, the project can be approved to go forward.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: In your sector—which is semiconductors—I understand that workers are highly skilled. It's surely quite a competitive sector. Do workers ever get discouraged, given lengthy wait times, and decide to pursue other work opportunities in another country instead?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: I think Canada has a great reputation that we can build on. We do great research here and there are great opportunities for growth, personal development and skills development.

I believe Canada is still seen internationally as having great opportunities for individuals. However, we can strengthen Canada's reputation in attracting the specialized talent through this expedited processing so that there is more confidence that we can bring on this highly specialized talent and they can join Canada with confidence.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: That doesn't answer my question. My question was as follows: to your knowledge, are there workers who become discouraged during the process because of lengthy delays in obtaining a work permit, resulting in companies losing access to top talent in specialized fields?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: I would say it's two things. One is that there's discouragement. They may say they have a secure job offer if they return to their home country or pursue another path. The other is that they may time out through the process. In both cases, we would lose someone who would be an excellent candidate to join Canada.

You're absolutely right.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: My question is the following: Does that happen? Have you been told by member companies that lengthy delays lead to that result?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: We've heard from our members that they have lost people when they could not provide a clear path to permanent residency. It was not as clear, and they lost individuals from their team. They said, “I think I need to accept a job back home. I don't want to leave Canada, but because I don't have visibility on my path to permanent residency, I have to leave Canada.” As a result, yes, Canada suffers.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: So would you recommend that the government reduce processing times for work permits?

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: Absolutely. Again, we have a modest number of semiconductor candidates in this pool.

It's very similar to what was done with medical doctors just a few months ago. Having specialized resources to process semiconductor talent for both work permits and permanent residency would definitely benefit our ability to attract and retain key talent.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: I don't have much time left, but I would like to ask you one last question.

It's often said that businesses need to focus on increasing their productivity, as well as on robotics, automation and artificial intelligence, and rely less on immigration. What are your thoughts on that?

● (1605)

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: As we've said, our priority is specialized talent that brings either engineering expertise to lead other engineers around them or key research development skills. These things don't easily get replaced by AI. These are our key value builders in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bozynski.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Deschênes.

[*English*]

That ends our first round of questions. Now we're going to begin our second round of questions.

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

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

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing before us today.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Ralli, if I may. Do we still have you?

Nicole Ralli: Yes, you do.

Costas Menegakis: That's wonderful.

Through FedDev Ontario and the Ontario jobs and prosperity fund, Ms. Ralli, your organization, Dishon Limited, has been provided roughly $8.5 million in government support, and that was supposed to be tied to over 160 promised jobs. How many of those roles actually went to Canadians?

Nicole Ralli: I would say that, in the course of the last 12 months, we've hired 53 CNC machinists. As per my earlier statement about our general overall demographic, I would say that it's very similar. About 20% of those new jobs that were created went to foreign workers, and 80% went to Canadians.

Costas Menegakis: How many of those, would you say, went to young Canadians, specifically the young workers under 25?

Nicole Ralli: Again, it's probably 75%. I'm happy to get those exact demographics and provide them to you. I'm giving you an estimation based on my knowledge of the hires. If you would like the exact statistics, I'm happy to have those provided to you.

Costas Menegakis: If you could endeavour to table that with the committee, I would really appreciate it, please.

Nicole Ralli: It's not a problem.

Costas Menegakis: The reason I'm bringing these things up is that we had a young man, Ethan Miranda, a bright young student who did everything right, at this committee a few months ago. He told us he was unemployed for two years. He graduated from a very competitive program for the high-tech industry. He sent out over 500 applications, and he could not find a job in his field because, in large part, jobs that were available were being taken by people from outside of this country and were not offered to Canadians.

Young Canadians need to have a voice, and I believe Parliament is the place where their voices can be heard. It's a little too easy what's gone on: not taking into consideration the need and the requirement to ensure that the talent we do have in Canada stays in Canada. This starts with Canadians and Canadians first.

That's not to say that the immigrant community and people from around the world who have chosen Canada as a country haven't contributed tremendously to the growth of our country. However, we do have a high youth unemployment rate right now, and it's very important that they get priority in jobs they are qualified to do.

Having said that, I have a motion that I'd like to present in the limited time that I have, Madam Chair. It reads as follows:

> That, in relation to its study on attracting and empowering global talent to strengthen Canada's economy, the committee report the following observations and recommendations to the House:
>
> Canada is still undergoing a devastating youth jobs crisis;
>
> Finding work for unemployed Canadians should be a top priority of the Government of Canada;
>
> The Government of Canada should focus on training Canadians to address labour shortages and for the jobs of the future; and
>
> In light of the foregoing, [the] committee recommends that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship reduce immigration levels in the upcoming immigration levels plan.

This motion I make now is strictly fuelled by the need to look after Canadians and, quite frankly, people who are here already and hope to stay here. It's a broken system, which the Liberals have broken. It's time to rein it in, so I'm putting that motion forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr.—

Nicole Ralli: Do I have an opportunity to comment on that?

The Chair: No, unfortunately, Ms. Ralli, you cannot.

Costas Menegakis: No, it's a motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Menegakis.

Now I have a speaking list. I have Ms. Rempel Garner, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Redekopp and then Mr. Fragiskatos.

Ms. Rempel Garner.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

We have heard a lot of debate so far in this study. There have been a lot of, I think, lobby groups that have come to the committee and have made comments like we need to attract the best and the brightest, without making any claim or argument that perhaps the best and the brightest might already be in Canada.

We've heard a lot of people imply that the only way to grow Canada's economy is to continue very high levels of immigration. What we haven't heard a lot of is balance from two other perspectives. The first is affected workers. We know from Bank of Canada data that wages have been driven down in Canada because of very high levels of immigration that haven't kept pace with economic growth. We also haven't heard, frankly, from.... We started to hear today from a witness who was talking about the need to focus particularly on retaining the skilled labour that's here in Canada.

I was in rural Quebec a few weeks ago, and I was in a region where the rate of unemployment was 2.3%, well below the natural rate of unemployment. The number one thing that I heard from manufacturers in that region was that they have skilled workers who have integrated into their communities. They have low unemployment compared to the rest of the country, yet their needs and the immigration policies in their regions are being subsumed by metropolitan regions with levels of high unemployment. Essentially, the government is not removing people who don't have legal reason to be there, and they're trying to remove skilled workers in regions with areas of low unemployment.

I'm reading the motion from my colleague now. Given that the government is going to undertake the unveiling of their levels plan next week, I think it would behoove the committee to put something forward to the House, given that we've had several meetings on this particular topic.

The motion recognizes that we still have a youth jobs crisis in the country. I think that we would all agree on that. Finding work for unemployed Canadians should be a top priority of the Government of Canada. Focusing on training Canadians to address labour shortages for the jobs of the future is, again, something that I don't think we've heard enough about because we've mostly had corporate lobbyists and corporate associations arguing for more immigration, but really not focusing on the training component as a counterbalance to immigration levels. I think that's a good point.

Frankly, we know that immigration levels need to come down. I think that anybody on this committee would be hard-pressed to make an argument that would be well received within the lived experiences of their communities, people who don't have the ability to hire corporate lobbyists in their own communities here.

I think this is a good motion. My colleague here and I put forward a response of the Conservative Party's position to the levels plan in the national media this morning. I would just like to, across party lines perhaps in part, take this opportunity to implore my Liberal colleagues to bring this particular point up in their caucus meeting. For a long time, we have heard the interests of corporate lobby groups be the ones that primarily drive immigration policy in the country.

Not all corporate lobbyists are the same on this front—again, I point to the example that I just gave in rural Quebec—but a lot of them, I think, are coming to us asking for higher levels of immigration because they are used to it. They have business models that are predicated on suppressing wages and creating a scarcity of jobs rather than looking at productivity, which is much harder work, or at training Canada's youth. That is like the dirty little secret tension that no corporate lobbyist really wants to talk about here. I think we started to get to that a little bit today, and that has to be disrupted. If we are not breaking that tension and we're not being honest about it in this committee, in debate in the House of Commons and in our immigration levels, then the consensus for immigration in Canada will continue to deteriorate.

● (1610)

I want to be very clear. It's not an immigrant's fault—who wants to come to Canada to build a better life—that we see scarcity in the job market or depressed wages. It is solely the fault of policy-makers who have decided to keep immigration levels this high for this long, particularly without consulting with the provinces on things like health care, availability of social benefits and education.

I'll speak freely to colleagues in here and a colleague who sits across the way. He's not here right now. I'm sorry. I'm not supposed to say that.

We just had a very difficult conversation in Alberta that led to referendum questions related to immigration. I don't think those questions would have been asked if the Liberal government had been more responsible with setting levels.

My concern right now is that under this Prime Minister, we still have a generationally high, unsustainable immigration rate. We don't have enough houses. We don't have enough housing. High levels of immigration have masked fundamental structural weaknesses in the Canadian economy, including productivity, that are not going to magically get better if we continue to juice immigration levels. It's that tension between having enough social infrastructure and managing integration while also meeting legitimate needs in the immigration system. That balance is just not being struck right now.

In the context of this study, I think we have to be very careful, as parliamentarians, in agreeing to a premise of hearing from one group that we need more and more immigration. I think we have to start pushing back on some of the lobby groups we see and start putting more onus on them to talk about training, the long-term pipeline development of talent and, frankly, productivity measures that are stymied by high levels of immigration.

Colleagues, I think this is a good motion. I will just say this: I think we need to have this debate in the House of Commons. I am concerned not only about the government burying the levels in the budget. I'm also concerned about the fact that there are a couple of things happening. We don't really know how many people are actually in the country right now. We don't have exit tracking data from the government, for example. I think the CBC is reporting a story today of misleading graphs coming out of the government that show population decreasing, when in fact it's increasing. If we're getting erroneous information from the government, that's problematic too. How can we set levels or know if the corporate lobbyists in front of us today are accurate if we don't have that information as parliamentarians?

I would like to see the consensus for immigration restored in this country, but we can't do that without major systemic reform. I think the start of that is acknowledging some of the premises put forward in this motion, which I've just read. I would encourage my colleagues to support it. I think it's very important that, prior to the levels plan being set....

Briefly, the Prime Minister did say to The New York Times—to an American newspaper—that he could see immigration increasing. The immigration minister herself said that levels should increase. I would like to know why. Are we working on behalf of corporate interests, which haven't put a lot of effort, frankly, into training Canadian youth?

I think there has been some brokenness, particularly in the service sector, of that social contract between employers and workers, where we see natural wage growth and an obligation to train Canadian youth, invest in the long-term development of the workforce of Canada and, frankly, not depress wages, so that Canadians can have kids.

I would like to see us support this motion. I would like to see this debated in the House of Commons. I would like to see the government recognize that until there's fundamental system reform in the immigration system.... I think there was a suggestion today of a voluntary LMIA. There's been so much systemic fraud in both the TFW system and the LMIA process writ large, with allegations of employers selling LMIAs. We just had the Auditor General's report on student fraud. None of that has been rectified, and now we have corporate groups coming in and saying that they want even more.

● (1615)

Guys, read the room a little. We need to have fundamental system reform in the immigration system if we want to see a social contract for immigration. Much to the detriment of Canadians and immigrants alike, it is deteriorating because of the immigration department's being treated like the armpit of cabinet for 10-plus years.

Let's support this motion. Let's get some debate in the House of Commons, and let's do the hard work, as a Parliament, of restoring Canada's consensus for immigration, rather than kowtowing to the needs of expensive corporate lobbyists.

Thank you.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Mr. Jackson.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll do my best not to repeat some of the things my colleagues have already said, but I think Mr. Menegakis's motion is timely.

I'm new to this committee, as you're all aware, but I have been very concerned since my arrival here—and in the couple of days we've been talking about this study—about attracting and empowering global talent. However, very few of the witnesses we've heard from have talked about the serious gaps that exist in training Canadian young people to meet the need they all come here saying exists in the tech sector—in engineering. One witness, two days ago, said, of the government's so-called ambitious building schedule, that they have all these gaps in skill that they need to fill, and the only people who can fill them are internationally educated professionals and international students.

Why is that? That makes absolutely no sense to me when we have 13% youth unemployment—and higher in some regions. We have tens of thousands of skilled workers being laid off in critical sectors not just in southern Ontario but across many provinces. I was just out in British Columbia recently. Lots of skilled people out there are being laid off in forestry and other sectors. Are these people unintelligent? Is that the view of all the witnesses coming here—that these people can't be retrained to fill the skilled-worker positions in the emerging economy and in these sectors that are incredibly short?

Rather, is there a gap in our educational institutions that doesn't allow domestic students to get into a number of these programs? Is there a gap that doesn't allow for a financial bridge for someone who's been laid off from a sector, so they can take the necessary retraining and education in order to fill these jobs?

I understand why—by default, because it's quicker—the associations, chambers of commerce and businesses come here and say, “We have to fix this problem fast, and the fastest way to do it is by allowing access to internationals.” However, is that the right decision for a country to make—leaving out the workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own? That's due to an unfair trade war by the American administration and due to other provincial government decisions. Going back to my British Columbia example, they are systematically killing an industry.

I'm not sure we're focusing on the right things. When we're in the midst of a devastating youth job crisis, as Mr. Menegakis said, the top priority has to be finding work for the youth of this country who are unemployed and for the individuals already in skilled sectors who have been laid off. I don't see a lot of that. In fact, from what we've heard from the immigration minister as recently as yesterday in question period.... She's waving the “mission accomplished” sign and thinks she's on the right track.

I'm not convinced. I'm hearing from young people in my constituency saying that if the LMIA changes go through on November 3, they might as well pack up shop. How many young Canadians have already made that decision, leaving these gaps in critical sectors of our economy? How many have already left the country? Maybe that's something Parliament should be debating. If we're talking about critical skills gaps in sectors of our economy—there's no question that this is very important—why aren't we looking to Canadian youth and pushing our post-secondary institutions? If they are offering these programs, why aren't we getting more young Canadians into them? I have yet to hear about that.

I know we have further witnesses later today, but I think this is worthy of a debate in the Canadian House of Commons. It's important—I certainly hope so—for the young people in my constituency who have been reaching out to me over the last number of days and beyond, as I'm sure they have in many of my colleagues' ridings as well.

● (1625)

It's time this motion proceeds, and I look forward to parties supporting it. The reality is that if we continue to rely on international students to fill the gaps that industry and university lobbyists are saying can only be filled by them, I'm not sure what hope that gives young people for the future of this country and why they should bother staying here at all.

Perhaps more will continue looking at other post-secondary options in other countries around the world. Dozens of people I graduated with have made that choice—and made it years ago—and it's getting worse, not better. That is something that falls at the feet of this Liberal government. It's not immigrants and not international students. It's the brain drain, the talent drain from Canadian institutions, from Canadian post-secondary facilities. I think it's time for a debate on this issue.

With that, Madam Chair, I know that other colleagues have a few more things to say, but I really hope to see some support for my colleague's motion. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the list, we have Mr. Redekopp, unless you think both of your colleagues have already said it all, Mr. Redekopp, and we can go over to Mr. Fragiskatos.

Brad Redekopp: Don't you want to hear more?

The Chair: I just figured they were very thorough.

Brad Redekopp: They were, but there are a few things that I would like to add.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Redekopp.

Brad Redekopp: I support my colleague's motion. I think it's very important that we have this debate. I think it's important that we have this debate in the House, actually, because, as my colleagues mentioned, there are all kinds of different things.

The first thing I want to mention, to start with, is that it's very important to always remember that this is not the fault of immigrants. This is not the fault of people who left their homes and came to Canada. They were invited into something that they thought they were getting, and in many cases, they didn't get what they thought. It hurts so many people in the process: people whose expectations are not met, companies here that.... There are so many people who are impacted and face difficulties because of the way this government has implemented immigration over the last 10 years.

Nothing is really different now. Yes, the numbers are a bit lower than they were a few years ago, but to compare today to a few years ago.... I don't know if you know, but whenever you look at stats, most people ignore the COVID years, and I think it's a similar situation here, where we had some pretty crazy immigration years that were real aberrations from the long-term trends. I think that anybody with any common sense would look at that and say that those years should just be ignored because they were so strange. Compared to long-term averages, our numbers are still very high, and that's the thing that people often miss.

It's really important to remember that this problem was not caused by immigrants. This problem was caused by this government.

There's the other thing I wanted to highlight. I know that Ms. Ralli said it in her testimony. She mentioned the fact that they have skilled talent that is being lost because of some of the policies of the government to turn around and send back people who may be trained and may be integrated not only into companies like Ms. Ralli's but also into the communities they live in. Because their permits are expiring and there's no pathway for them, they go home.

At the same time, we have asylum seekers and other people who have come to our country and get to stay in our country for multiple years—three, four or five years or more—because they're meandering their way through our very porous immigration system. That doesn't make a lot of sense when companies have to go out and try to find talent that they already have when the government is making people go home. There's a lot of confusion there.

I also want to highlight that we all know that the consensus on immigration has been lost. That, again, is the fault of policies that have been implemented by this government and have resulted in these very large numbers in immigration. That's really what I want to highlight. I want to remind this committee and everybody here that we need to have this debate on increasing the immigration numbers, as proposed by the government, because I don't think that's where the country is at. It's certainly not where we are. I'd love to hear the read from the other side on how they could possibly justify increasing the numbers from where we are now, considering that even now we are at historic highs.

With that, I would encourage everybody to support this motion. Thank you.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Redekopp.

Mr. Fragiskatos is next.

Peter Fragiskatos: We will have debates, certainly, Madam Chair, on immigration policy and the levels plan in particular at this committee and in the House of Commons. We do want to hear from witnesses, however.

With that, I move to adjourn debate on the motion.

The Chair: We'll take a vote on that.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: The debate is adjourned.

I'm going to return to the witnesses and to the second round of questioning.

If it's okay with our witnesses to stay an extra seven and a half minutes, I'd like to finish up this round with five minutes for Ms. Sodhi and two and a half minutes for Mr. Deschênes.

Ms. Sodhi, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I would like to start off with you, Ms. Bozynski. You mentioned a couple of recommendations in your opening statement, so I'd like to give you some time to elaborate on those, if you'd like.

Karen Bozynski: Certainly, and perhaps I can also respond to some of the dialogue here today.

Canada's Semiconductor Council is committed to training Canadians. In fact, we've partnered with CMC Microsystems, which launched just weeks ago, just this fall, so the impact is brand new—and this is something we included in our recommendations in our talent report, which we published last year. It is bringing more Canadian students into semiconductor roles. We committed, with one of our recommendations from this, to work with firms like CMC Microsystems to deliver training for students graduating from bachelor's programs and master's programs, and to bring training opportunities to them.

This September, there were three courses introduced, and there are seven more coming up in January. In 2027, we'll have 10 courses that give Canadian students graduating with a bachelor's degree the opportunity to upskill and fill the gap that's been identified in going from a university program to being hire-ready in industry. This will increase the ability for Canadian students to land more industry jobs. We at Canada's Semiconductor Council, on behalf of our members, are excited that, having heard that there is a gap, we've been able to bring forward something that's going to benefit Canadians as well as add, strategically, international hires with experience, so they can learn additional skills from and be mentored by a great global network of talent with more experience.

In fact, both the strategic direction of training Canadian students plus strategic international hires will build stronger Canadian career opportunities for Canadians. That's been highlighted by some of these member committee—

Amandeep Sodhi: I'm really sorry, Ms. Bozynski. I just want to ask Ms. Ralli a question as well. Thank you so much, though.

Ms. Ralli, I believe you made a statement earlier, after Mr. Redekopp presented his motion, and said that you wanted to respond to it. I'd like to give you some time to respond to it now.

Nicole Ralli: Yes, I just wanted to comment on the fact that, as Dishon Limited, we are highly invested in hiring Canadian youth, to the point that we are embedded into Centennial College, which is the local college around here that has our CNC machining skilled trades. We're helping them develop curricula around what some of these future machining materials and components look like.

You know, I don't want to take it, in breadth, that we're looking for insertion of immigrant labour. We are trying to grow at a rate that is beyond what these colleges are able to graduate their Canadian and permanent resident people. This isn't "hiring one instead of the other." We need to bolster our hiring with those trained, skilled immigrants in order to complement the current existing PR residents and Canadian citizens.

● (1635)

Amandeep Sodhi: Going back to you, Ms. Bozynski, are there any further recommendations that you haven't yet mentioned that you would like to make to the committee today?

Karen Bozynski: Certainly. Thank you so much.

As we mentioned and as was raised by some of the members of this committee, who are hopefully still able to hear the message that we are bringing, we're seeing an 80% to 90% retention rate through sticky programs. Earlier this week, on Tuesday, at this committee, there was a university speaking about their co-op education program and how that provided stickiness in the market. Programs like talent innovation Canada provides the opportunity for stickiness, for bringing talent into the industry. There have been many great internship programs and co-op programs across Canada stimulating this. Increasing the opportunities for students to get into programs in the industry increases the stickiness for these students in Canada. As I mentioned, there's 80% to 90% retention, so I recommend that this program continue.

Also, to respond to how we can help Canadians, this helps Canadians. The strategic immigration recommendations we are bringing are strategic and complement the Canadian talent development of Canadians in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bozynski. That's time.

Thank you, Ms. Sodhi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deschênes, you have two and a half minutes.

Alexis Deschênes: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let's talk a bit about the point that was raised. I would like to hear what both of you have to say about the idea that, ultimately, young people in Quebec and Canada are not being offered jobs that are going to immigrants. We're told that young people are unable to access those jobs.

We could start with Ms. Ralli.

What efforts are you making to hire locally before resorting to immigration?

[*English*]

Nicole Ralli: It is always our priority to hire locally. Right now, we're trying to grow at a rate of doubling. I said that we're at about 93 CNC machinists. I would like to hire another 75 in the course of the rest of 2026 and 2027. I quite literally, in terms of CNC machinists, would hire every single local person who came to me qualified, and I would still fall short of the amount of labour I need to fill my order books.

I don't have a specific example of how we're prioritizing it, but we definitely give priority to Canadian citizens and permanent residents before we look for international talent, but that readily available talent pool does not exist out there.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Okay.

As part of your applications, is there still an impact assessment? Is a job offer always advertised to the local population first, before applying for a work permit?

[*English*]

Nicole Ralli: Yes, we did that. We've done the LMIAs in our area. We understand the unemployment rate in our area.

Specific to our sector, that data doesn't seem to correlate with the number of people who we're seeing coming in for interviews and coming in to accept positions. It's common across the manufacturing industry right now, specifically CNC machining. All of our counterparts, whether they're within this area, within Quebec or even within the U.S.A., are struggling to find qualified CNC machinists. It's not a readily available skill set.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Thank you.

Ms. Bozynski, can you provide a quick response? There are 15 seconds left.

[*English*]

Karen Bozynski: Thank you so much.

I had an opportunity to speak briefly with MP Menegakis earlier. I was sharing with him that I interviewed 1,000 people and hired 250 in Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. Those were retail employees whom I helped train to bring electronics assembly skills to them. There is a real opportunity, which I have seen first-hand, where there are great opportunities to provide training to Canadians.

Like I said—

● (1640)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Bozynski, but we're now at the end.

Karen Bozynski: Thank you.

The Chair: We're at three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Deschênes.

[*English*]

I want to thank our two witnesses today.

Thank you for your patience. Thank you for the excellent testimony and your responses.

I'm now going to suspend for a few minutes. We're going to rapidly get our second panel in so we can try to have a couple of rounds of questions.

● (1640)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1645)

The Chair: The committee is back in session.

I'm delighted to begin our second hour and our second panel. I'd like to proceed with introducing our four panellists.

From the Canadian Association for Long Term Care, we have Jodi Hall, the chief executive officer, joining us by video conference. From Concordia University, we have in the room with us Dr. Effrosyni Diamantoudi, provost and vice-president, academic. We also have Julie Foisy, senior director, student success and retention. From the Toronto Region Board of Trade, we have Saad Usmani, senior director, workforce development and economic research. He is appearing by video conference.

A warm welcome to all of you.

We will begin with five-minute interventions from each one of you, followed by rounds of questions. I'm going to begin with Ms. Foisy, who's in the room here.

You will have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Julie Foisy (Senior Director, Student Success and Retention, Concordia University): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for inviting us to testify before you today.

[*English*]

My name is Julie Foisy, and I'm the senior director of student success and retention at Concordia University in Montreal. My portfolio spans the student experience from entry into university through to graduation, including academic success, career development, experiential learning, co-operative education and employer relations.

[*Translation*]

I am joined by Concordia's senior vice-president of university affairs.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi (Provost and Vice-President, Academic, Concordia University): Madam Chair, thank you for inviting us to join you today.

[*English*]

My name is Effrosyni Diamantoudi, and I am the provost and vice-president, academic, at Concordia University. Since 2003, I've been a professor of economics at Concordia, a comprehensive research-engaged university. Concordia comprises four faculties and two schools.

This fall, we welcomed close to 33,000 undergraduate students and over 5,700 graduate students in for-credit programs across two campuses, where 10% of our undergraduate students are international students and 38% of our graduate students are from abroad. Key to our success is having robust partnerships with industry, community and government that provide students with real-world work experiences.

Julie Foisy: Concordia's experience and expertise in co-operative education can contribute to this study at the intersection where education and the labour market meet.

Across Quebec and Canada, employers in sectors such as aerospace engineering, technology and advanced manufacturing are looking for highly trained talent. Universities are developing much of that talent. We work with these students to connect their education to meaningful work, and we support employers to access the skills they need. Co-operative education is one way of doing that. It gives employers early access to emerging talent and a recruitment pipeline, and it gives students the opportunity to apply their learning, gain professional experience and build networks before graduation.

For employers, co-op can also reduce some of the risk involved in recruitment. Employers can bring students into their organizations for a defined period, typically three to four months, assess their skills in practice and develop a relationship with potential future employees.

Co-operative education and experiential learning more broadly are also part of the broader transition from education into employment. Students, international and domestic, may arrive with strong academics and considerable potential, but they still need opportunities to understand an evolving labour market, build professional networks, develop confidence in workplace expectations and demonstrate their skills to employers.

At Concordia, employers recruiting our co-op students include organizations such as Bombardier, Airbus, Pratt & Whitney, CAE, Genentech, Air Canada, Ericsson and others. These are employers in sectors that are important to Quebec and Canada's economic future.

International students at Concordia are an important part of the talent pipeline and are successfully securing placements with Canadian employers. Attracting talented students to Canada does not automatically translate into equal access to professional experience once they are here. Recruitment brings talent into the country. Integration determines whether that talent is connected to the employers, sectors and regions that need it.

I think about Samina, who came to Concordia as an international student and completed a mechanical engineering degree. As a student, she completed career-shaping internships with Bombardier and Pratt & Whitney while giving back to the university community as a mentor to incoming students. Today, she works as an engineer at Pratt & Whitney in Montreal and is pursuing a master's in aerospace engineering. Samina is a strong example of international talent developing, contributing and building a career in Canada.

Since fall 2022, more than 2,000 international students have taken part in Concordia programming focused specifically on the Quebec labour market, including hiring practices, networking, the role of French in the workplace, labour rights and connections with employers and alumni. These supports matter because students may be unfamiliar with how recruitment works locally, how to present their experience to Canadian employers or how language expectations may shape opportunities in the labour market.

We also work to connect students with opportunities outside of Montreal, where employers across Quebec are seeking skilled talent. Through partnerships with Promis, Emplois en régions and regional employers, participation in regional career affairs has increased by more than 70%, and over 20 students have secured employment through the Promis pilot. These initiatives help international students discover opportunities beyond Montreal, connecting their skills with regional workforce needs and supporting their longer-term integration into Quebec communities.

We see the impact of our initiatives in students securing employment and in employers who return year after year to recruit Concordia students. These ongoing relationships reflect the strength of Concordia's academic preparation, complemented by practical experience through work-integrated learning. Students gain valuable skills and professional opportunities, and employers gain access to well-prepared talent.

More broadly, attracting international talent is only the first step—

● (1650)

The Chair: I'll give you 15 seconds to wrap up, please.

Julie Foisy: Thank you.

Realizing its full potential requires strong connections among education, career prep, work experience and employers. These are connections that universities like Concordia help build, ensuring that the skills students develop in Canada contribute to our workforce and economy. Canada's ability to attract talent matters, but so does our ability to integrate that talent into the sectors, employers and communities where it can contribute. Co-operative education fuels that integration.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next, we have five minutes for Ms. Hall from the Canadian Association for Long Term Care.

Jodi Hall (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Association for Long Term Care): Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Jodi Hall. I'm the chief executive officer for the Canadian Association for Long Term Care. We advocate for a sustainable long-term care system that delivers quality care and enables Canadians to live and age with dignity.

Canada's ability to attract and retain global talent has direct implications for the long-term care sector, our health system and our economy. Canada's population aged 85 and older is expected to double by 2040. We will need substantially more long-term care capacity to meet this demand, yet the sector is already experiencing significant workforce shortages. When long-term care homes cannot recruit and retain sufficient staff, residents may wait longer for appropriate care, hospitals will face additional pressure and family caregivers can struggle to remain in the workforce. Long-term care is not simply a health care service. It is essential health and economic infrastructure.

Domestic recruitment, education and retention must remain priorities. Immigration is not a substitute for these efforts. However, domestic workforce development alone cannot address the sector's immediate needs. We need a coordinated national workforce strategy that uses multiple pathways to attract, train and retain care providers. CALTC's recent national survey provides important evidence of this contribution of internationally educated nurses to long-term care, and a recent survey conducted by the Ontario Long Term Care Association, with 276 long-term care homes, reported that over 11,000 temporary foreign workers were employed and that these workers are already supporting residents and communities across the country.

However, immigration policies and processing delays can put this workforce at risk. Employers face recurring administrative and financial burdens associated with labour market impact assessments and work permit renewals. Workers may face uncertainty about whether they can continue working while immigration applications are being processed. For long-term care homes, losing an experienced worker is not simply a recruitment challenge; it can disrupt continuity of care, place additional pressure on existing staff and require employers to repeat costly recruitment and training processes.

CALTC recommends three priorities for federal action.

First, establish a dedicated immigration pathway for long-term care workers. This should recognize the sector's sustained labour needs and create reliable opportunities for internationally educated health professionals.

Second, develop a more streamlined work permit option for eligible long-term care workers with appropriate employer accountability and worker protections that could reduce administrative burdens while recognizing the essential role of long-term care.

Third, protect workers already contributing to the sector. For temporary foreign workers, we recommend timely processing and provision of work permit extensions for eligible workers whose renewals or immigration applications are pending.

I'd like to illustrate why this matters. There was a recent article in the Ottawa Citizen about a long-term care home in a rural community in Ontario that shared that they could lose 60% of their workforce in the next 24 months if the staff's temporary foreign worker permits were not renewed.

In another example, an experienced internationally trained care provider from the Philippines began working full time for a long-term care home on Prince Edward Island. Her open work permit expired in July 2025 while her Atlantic immigration program application was still being processed. Her open work permit was not renewed, and she returned to the Philippines, leaving a full-time position vacant, only to be approved under the Atlantic immigration program earlier this year. She has now returned to fill the vacant position that she previously held. Because there was no bridging option for her original work permit, this created significant stress for the home, the residents and the worker as they navigated the system.

Canada's immigration system must balance many priorities. Maintaining program integrity and worker protections is essential, but we must also ensure that our policies allow people who are already contributing to Canada to continue to do so. Success should not be measured only by our ability to attract global talent but by our ability to help that talent put its skills to work, build lasting careers and strengthen the communities that need them. Long-term care is an immediate and compelling example of why this matters.

Thank you.

● (1655)

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

Now we have five minutes for Mr. Usmani.

Mr. Usmani, please go ahead.

Saad Usmani (Senior Director, Workforce Development and Economic Research, Toronto Region Board of Trade): Good afternoon, Madam Chair and honourable committee members. Thank you for the invitation to appear today.

My name is Saad Usmani. I'm the senior director of workforce development and economic research at the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Our organization represents 10,500 members across the Toronto region, which accounts for 24% of the Canadian economy and where immigration has been pivotal for growth and prosperity. In fact, 47% of the Toronto metropolitan area's residents are immigrants.

Newcomers play a critical role in building a more competitive Canadian economy. As a small economy, we often look abroad to find the best and brightest to grow our companies and institutions. In many respects, other countries look to Canada as a successful model, where we enjoy relatively high levels of support for relatively high levels of immigration. Still, there's much that can be done to ensure that Canada's immigration policies are meeting our needs and setting our businesses up for success.

In recent years, Canada has lost some of its relative attractiveness as a destination for international students and newcomers. We've also seen the best and brightest come to Canada, only to pick up and leave for better opportunities elsewhere or return home. According to the 2025 study “The Leaky Bucket”, “one in five immigrants [leaves] Canada within 25 years of landing.” Onward migration risk is highest five years after landing, with higher-skilled immigrants more than twice as likely to leave compared to lower-skilled workers.

As the government considers changes to its approach to attract and retain global talent, the Toronto Region Board of Trade recommends the following.

The first is clarity, stability and transparency. Part of what has hurt Canada's reputation and attractiveness as a destination for students and newcomers in recent years has been drastic changes to immigration policy. A dramatic rise in students and new immigrants necessitated a sharp pullback. Stabilized permanent resident targets and more sustainable temporary resident targets in the immigration levels plan are a welcome step. Going forward, the success of Canada's immigration policy will be linked to a clear, stable and transparent immigration strategy that preserves public support.

Next is a renewed focus on high-skilled needs and entrepreneurship. The introduction of express entry in 2015, alongside other evidence-based reforms, was a key driving force behind improved labour market outcomes for new immigrants. Going forward, the comprehensive ranking system, CRS, should better reflect factors that are predictive of long-term outcomes such as pre-admission earnings, higher language benchmarks and field of study.

Similarly, Canada has been without a dedicated federal start-up immigration pathway since the start-up visa program was paused. At a time when entrepreneurship in Canada is in decline and building global champions is table stakes for our economic future, it's more important than ever that the government's promised entrepreneur pilot launches quickly and is designed to avoid the pitfalls of the previous program.

We need a clear division of roles between the provinces and the federal government. Overlapping programs have added to the complexity and reduced the efficacy of the immigration system. Federal and provincial programming should complement and reinforce one another.

We also recommend a broader talent strategy. Our ability to attract and retain workers goes well beyond immigration program design. It includes tax policy, deeper pools of capital and a regulatory environment that incentivizes growth.

Last, but certainly not least, is supporting integration. Overqualification continues to be a significant challenge that suppresses the potential of newcomers. Language barriers, lack of networks, limited credential recognition, and lengthy and costly licensing processes all contribute to this challenge. More must be done to ensure that supports to address these challenges exist, are of high quality, are accessible and are ultimately being used by newcomers.

I thank you again for the invitation and I welcome your questions.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you to all of you for your excellent opening statements.

We are now going to begin with rounds of questions. In the first round of questions, you will have six minutes each.

Our first questioner is Ms. Rempel Garner for six minutes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to direct my questions to Ms. Hall, because I think your industry is one that has fallen by the wayside in terms of directed and precise immigration policy in the country. I'm going to try some recommendations with you to see if they make sense based on your lived experience and that of your members.

Would your association support a recommendation that IRCC formally consult provinces and sector employees before setting levels for occupations like yours, which are tied to provincially funded services?

Jodi Hall: Yes, I don't think we'd have any objection to further consultation, especially with the long-term care home sector itself.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I know that some of the issues around long-term care are obviously staff issues, but also capacity.

Would you support a recommendation that links sector-specific immigration streams to provinces showing that they actually have funded bed capacity to absorb workers in your association?

Jodi Hall: Yes. There is a tremendous need for employment, especially as the population continues to age. There are multiple commitments on the part of provincial governments to create thousands of net new long-term care home spaces across the country, and we will require a workforce for that. We would appreciate an opportunity to provide that information.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

I can use the abbreviation PSW: personal support worker. Would that would be correct?

Jodi Hall: Yes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Has PSW wage growth fallen behind inflation right now?

Jodi Hall: When we look at compensation models in long-term care homes, the sectors we represent are almost exclusively unionized, with negotiated contracts in place. I can say that there are jurisdictions where there is wage parity, but there are negotiated contracts otherwise.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Would you support making LMIA approval in long-term care conditional on wages at or above the occupation's provincial median, adjusted for inflation every year?

Jodi Hall: I think that would be very difficult to agree to, simply because there are negotiated contracts in place that may not follow the same timelines.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Do you think your employers would be supportive of that, or is that something they would push back on in collective bargaining?

Jodi Hall: I think it would be very difficult for the employers to agree, simply because of timelines of contracts. They do receive funding through provincial governments, so there would have to be a tie-in.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I guess what I'm trying to get at is, when we have employer groups come in front of us and ask for higher levels of temporary workers, that there be some sort of safeguard to prevent wage suppression. I'd ask you to take that back to your members, because we're trying to do something that resembles work here.

Would you support a recommendation to put a share of LMIA fees into a fund for training young Canadians as PSWs?

● (1705)

Jodi Hall: We're absolutely supportive of domestic pathways to develop the workforce. If that were an identified pathway, there wouldn't be a strong objection, although we would like to see deep consideration for the labour market impact assessment and how it affects the long-term care sector. It does create a tremendous administrative burden, but we would be interested in talking about other opportunities for workforce development domestically.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: It does create an administrative burden, but it also, in theory, prevents fraud. Isn't that right?

Jodi Hall: I understand that position, but certainly in our sector's experience and in what we hear across the country, it has created far more challenges and has been more of a burden to a sector that already has tremendously limited resources. We would like to see a streamlining of that effort.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: How about a recommendation for a requirement that employers show real investment in domestic recruitment and paid training, such as something like an earn-while-you-learn placement before an LMIA is approved? Would your employers and your association support that?

Jodi Hall: We do have a position that we call “work-integrated learning”. There are already some tremendous innovative models that are happening across the country. I would point to one in British Columbia that's called HCAP, and there are other models that use an apprenticeship earn-and-learn model.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I have just a few seconds left, and there's one thing that I really want to get on the record, which is this: Would you support a recommendation for IRCC and Statistics Canada to track how many people got permanent residence through care sector streams who are still in the occupation, and then to report that to Parliament? What often happens is that we hear you need it, but then somebody comes in and might go to another stream.

Would you accept that recommendation, particularly as a retention metric?

Jodi Hall: Yes. We already can see, in a StatsCan report from August of 2025, that they report some evidence on permanent residency. They've noted that with temporary foreign workers and others working in long-term care, there is a 50% retention rate after five years for those who obtain permanent residency, but we would certainly welcome an opportunity to see that metric continue.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hall.

Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

[*Translation*]

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

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

I really want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I will start with Concordia. I'm a Concordia alumnus and proud graduate. A lot of what I do today actually started from my path while in university as a student involved in student leadership. I just wanted to really thank the university for creating an environment that help people enter into the real world, as was the slogan back then. I'm sure it's still the motto of the university. I'm so happy to see both of you here, Provost and Ms. Foisy.

I'd like to start off with the supports you have for international students. Have they evolved over the decades? I went to the university. It was about 2004 or so when I graduated. Have they evolved over the decades? What supports do you give, and how do they compare and contrast with Canadian students? The first question is on the evolution and how they compare and contrast.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: The numbers of international students at Concordia have changed over the years, primarily because the institution we are has changed over the years. Concordia is a young institution. It just turned 50 years old. It started as a primarily undergraduate institution, and we've developed our research capacity over the years. That alone changed the population of international students within Concordia.

The support we offer to international students is that of integrating them into the Canadian society and the Quebec society in particular.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the French-learning program, we are able to better integrate our students into Quebec society and the labour market.

[*English*]

There's a lot of support. I will let Julie speak about the integration into the labour market in particular through our work-integrated learning.

Julie Foisy: Ultimately, the student support that's offered to students wouldn't differ necessarily. Apart from francization, for international versus domestic students, we see a student as a student. In terms of co-ops, there is the support. As for the francization, as I said in my remarks, we support the connection into the labour market—understanding how to share their skills with employers and prepare, and understanding the Quebec labour market and how language may play into that. Ultimately, student supports for domestic and international are the same.

[*Translation*]

Sameer Zuberi: Thank you for that.

[*English*]

I'd just like to note, Madam Provost, that I saw in your biography that you were once upon a time an international student. Econometrics is your domain.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: It's game theory, actually.

Sameer Zuberi: That's cool. I have a math degree, pure and applied. I've never studied game theory but set theory and other logic.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Indeed, I arrived in Canada in 1991 as an international student, studied at University of Ottawa, continued at McGill, fell in love with the country and married a political refugee. Now I'm raising a proud quadrilingual Canadian.

Sameer Zuberi: There you go. Amazing. I'm sure there's a lot of game theory in this space here.

I'd like to go to Mr. Usmani.

Thank you for joining us by Zoom or whatever application we're using nowadays. It is Zoom.

In any case, you said something interesting in your remarks. You mentioned that other countries look to Canada as a successful model. You also had some cautionary points and some points where we should make some updates. On that first concept of looking to us as a successful model, can you share what you have noted from the sector that other countries see Canada as being successful within when it comes to immigration?

Saad Usmani: Certainly.

Part of it is the predictability of the immigration streams over the past decade or so. The welcoming nature and the multicultural aspect of Canada as well is what has made Canada something that other countries look at, even within Europe, as an example where integration is relatively successful, where immigrants can come and enjoy an opportunity and students can study.

Sameer Zuberi: On that concept of the integration of immigrants, from my knowledge, for decades Canada has had a policy of landing newcomers so they become part of the fabric of Canadian society. We have this to a much higher degree than some other countries that also have significant and important levels of immigration.

Would you agree with that?

Saad Usmani: Yes, I would agree with that.

Sameer Zuberi: That has created a considerable amount of social cohesion and enfranchisement of newly landed communities. Would you say this?

Saad Usmani: Yes, I would agree with that.

Sameer Zuberi: In terms of some suggestions you made, you said clarity, stability and transparency. That's something we've heard from others too. You did highlight something that I've been hearing about anecdotally, which is that the best and brightest are sometimes leaving.

I have two questions on this. First, has the best and the brightest leaving increased over the last years? Second, as it relates to peer countries similar to Canada, are we on par with them, or is it more than other peer countries?

Saad Usmani: I can't speak relative to what we see in other peer countries, but we've seen over the past 10 or 15 years, particularly when we look at data in Toronto, that others have been leaving for better opportunities, whether in the United States or other parts of the world.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

Thank you, Mr. Usmani.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for six minutes, Mr. Deschênes.

Alexis Deschênes: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My questions are for Jodi Hall, the executive director of the Canadian Association for Long Term Care.

Ms. Hall, I have a few basic questions for you so that I can properly understand how this works. You also represent people from my home province, Quebec. Quebec has streamlined processing for temporary foreign workers. Could you explain a little about how applications are handled in Quebec?

● (1715)

[*English*]

Jodi Hall: Yes, there is.

We recently had a national meeting of our members from across the country. There was a representative there from Quebec. Although there is variation at the provincial level in how some of these programs can work and the experiences of the sector, there is consistent need for programs to be more efficient and more streamlined. The level of workforce need in each of these provinces has a remarkable amount of comparability. Quebec is no exception to that.

When it comes to programs that are uniquely designed for Quebec, there are some learnings that we can take about how some items have been streamlined within the IRCC programs designed for that province that could potentially be used to create a targeted pathway for long-term care across the country.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Let's take the time to fully understand how this works in Quebec.

Quebec has identified certain professions, which are included on a list. When you recruit people for those professions, you have access to the simplified process. The simplified process means that a labour market impact assessment still has to be done, but—if I understand correctly—there's no need to prove that the job notice was advertised to the local population, because Quebec, after studying the situation, has identified needs in certain fields.

Have I correctly understood the process?

[*English*]

Jodi Hall: That is my understanding as well.

One of our recommendations that I shared was to find a streamlined approach for labour market impact assessments across the country. That is a very good example of how it could work.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Despite the streamlined processing of applications, there are still unmet labour needs in the long-term care sector in Quebec, aren’t there?

[*English*]

Jodi Hall: Yes, that's my understanding as well.

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Why is it that, despite the fact that procedures were streamlined, there is still trouble meeting the needs?

[*English*]

Jodi Hall: I think there are a number of things we can point to.

Certainly, it's not a new thing for long-term care across the country to have struggles with workforce recruitment, especially when you consider that many homes are located in rural communities and that we require skilled employees like licensed practical nurses or registered nurses. That certainly is a factor.

The experiences coming out of the pandemic were difficult. There was a lot of negative publicity that was put out across the sector in spite of the fact that long-term care is a tremendous place to work. There is a lot of opportunity domestically to be able to promote professions within the field, but there have also been a lot of misunderstandings. When you look at the long-term care continuum, there are many different facets to it. The long-term care homes are just one component; it's not a homogeneous group. There certainly is a lot of variation when you look across that full continuum.

When it comes to things like understanding compensation models, one would be more normal for one part of that continuum but not another. As I mentioned earlier, the employees are unionized in most long-term care homes and they have negotiated contracts. There are a lot of positive things for the sector in recruiting, but we have a lot more work to do to understand the supply and capacity that we have with colleges and universities.

We can look to Health Workforce Canada to see some of their tools that they've created for modelling and forecasting. We can see that what they forecasted, especially when we look at the personal support worker, exceeds the capacity we have to meet within any particular jurisdiction. That's why our recommendation is very much about focusing on the development of a national workforce strategy that has something planned properly for each province, including Quebec, but also, at the same time, developing international pipelines and keeping those open and as efficient as possible for the sector.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Alexis Deschênes: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Deschênes.

[*English*]

Thank you, Ms. Hall.

We now end the first round of questions for six minutes.

Now we go to the second round for five minutes. We will begin with Mr. Jackson, followed by Monsieur Joseph.

Mr. Jackson, your five minutes starts now.

Grant Jackson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

On the topic of bringing in more international students, I want to get a better understanding of where you expect them to live.

Your university reported that international registrations fell nearly 23% in 2025 compared with 2024, yet your own housing page originally said that residences were full for the fall of 2026 and directed students to your private partner, Campus1. Recruitment slowed and your housing notice was still telling students there was no room and to go to your private sector partner for housing.

If you get your way, and international student numbers are increased, where do you expect them to live?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: I'll make a clarification. The reason we directed our students to the private vendor is that our main residences were undergoing major renovations. It's a heritage building, the Grey Nuns. It's a beautiful heritage building in downtown Montreal that takes a lot of time and money to renovate and maintain. While we're undergoing renovations, we have to divert our students.

Grant Jackson: I understand that, but perhaps it's saying one thing and then saying another if you have reduced residence space but also ask for more international students at the same time, when you don't have housing stock available to put them in. Can you see the contradiction there?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: I don't quite see it. There's plenty of housing around Concordia. It's built to house students. It's always been the case that students were housed around Concordia in buildings that have studios, and it has never been a problem.

Grant Jackson: That's not what your own student union is saying. They have released a public report that identifies unaffordable rent and arriving without accommodation among the reasons international students need a transitional housing facility. In fact, it goes on to describe how one student they know of was sleeping in a shelter while another was staying on friends' couches until those friends could no longer house them. Those are just a couple of examples from your own student union's report.

I'm a bit confused about the contradiction that I'm getting from you versus the student union that represents students at your facility.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We have a way of accommodating students who are having difficulties. I'm not aware of the cases you're mentioning.

Grant Jackson: My office can certainly send those examples in that report to you. More broadly speaking, we're very concerned about many examples that this committee has heard of students ending up at food banks, struggling or living with six, seven or eight people in a one-bedroom or studio apartment.

Do you feel that this government has done enough to support the creation of housing at post-secondary institutions to appropriately accommodate the level of international students that you're asking for?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Housing is not an issue only for international students. As for student mobility in general, we have several rest-of-Canada students from outside Montreal, or students that come from the rest of Quebec to study at Concordia. The housing of students is an issue that perhaps we can discuss, but in Quebec, we don't receive any funding for housing. How exactly are we expected, as an institution, to accommodate our students when our funding is not for that purpose?

Grant Jackson: Frankly, I agree with you. That's why I'm very concerned that you're here advocating for more international students when you're contemplating and discussing the fact that the government already doesn't support you in building housing to deal with the existing demand from students.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: It's not more international students. Suppose they were from the rest of Canada. Where would they stay?

Grant Jackson: Exactly. We're not addressing that housing gap for any set of students, regardless of where they come from. Isn't it irresponsible to ask for more international students when you don't have enough housing for any students, regardless of where they come from?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We offer seats in classrooms, not bedrooms.

Grant Jackson: Your institution thinks it's the private sector's responsibility to provide housing for international students. Is that your position at Concordia University?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We have 45,000 students. We're not providing housing for 45,000 students.

Grant Jackson: You're asking for more.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: No, we're not asking for more. We are below where we were. We need to fill our labs. We need to deliver on our innovation goals. We need to be able to meet those targets. We are not asking for more. We need to go back to where we were.

● (1725)

Grant Jackson: Are you not confident that you could fill that gap with domestic students from within Canada?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Do you mean in Quebec?

Grant Jackson: I mean from Canada.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Wouldn't they need housing as well?

Grant Jackson: Exactly.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: I don't understand the question.

Grant Jackson: I don't understand why you aren't asking—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

Thank you, Ms. Diamantoudi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joseph, you have the floor for five minutes.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My question is for Ms. Foisy. I'll lighten the mood.

Once we have attracted this talent, how can Canada better retain these individuals and offer them career prospects that encourage them to make a lasting contribution to our economy?

[*English*]

Julie Foisy: As I covered in the opening remarks, investment and support for expanding experiential learning, work-integrated learning and co-operative education for domestic students, international students and students in general allow access to the workforce. It's a talent pipeline. It supports employers as well. This is what I would recommend.

[*Translation*]

Natilien Joseph: What are the main factors influencing top talent's decision to settle long-term in Canada rather than pursuing their careers elsewhere, in other countries, for example?

[*English*]

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: It's their job prospects and how welcome they feel in this society. Like a Canadian student who moves to Montreal from another province, it would be the same prospects that would encourage that student to remain. When the student goes through co-op, has opportunities and experiences in the workforce already, and has the chance of getting a job, they're much more likely to stay. They're more successful in their job search, and they're more successful with their experience.

[*Translation*]

Natilien Joseph: What sectors of the Canadian economy could benefit most from the contributions of this talent?

[*English*]

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We do get a report every fall from our ministry. It's a very detailed report, with various data on various sectors.

I'll share with you a rather intense experience that we're going through right now.

Three years ago, Concordia received its first Canada first research excellence fund. It is a $130-million project for the electrification of society. It's a very important project on clean energy, batteries, solar systems, etc. It's a $130-million project, with six years to deliver. We have accepted every Canadian applicant—every Canadian applicant. We cannot fill at least 30% of our openings. Our commitment was 250 Ph.D. students, and we are short. We have recently applied to the federal government for an extension exactly because we cannot fill the seats.

To go back to the beginning of your question, energy is a sector. Engineers are a prime area where there's a real shortage: engineers in nuclear energy, engineers in batteries and engineers in chemical and materials engineering.

[*Translation*]

Natilien Joseph: Let's continue with another topic.

How can the arrival of international entrepreneurs contribute to the creation of businesses, economic growth and job creation in Canada?

[*English*]

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We do have an incubator at Concordia, D3. The vast majority of the entrepreneurs, the start-ups at D3, are by international students, international doctoral students who joined D3 to develop their start-ups. They're creative, eager and very excited to succeed and build our economy.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Joseph.

[*English*]

Thank you, Ms. Diamantoudi.

I know we're at time. We're at 5:30. I'm going to give, if it's okay, three minutes to the Conservatives and three minutes to the Liberals to finish up. Then we'll wrap up for the day.

Ms. Rempel Garner, you have three minutes.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Thank you, Chair.

To our colleague from Concordia, I think a lot of the angst on universities asking for more student permits comes with concern that universities' operating budgets are so tied to a federal immigration program. I'm wondering if you would support a recommendation that universities publicly report the share of revenue coming from international tuition each year, if that's not already being reported, so that governments can see the risk before it hits.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Thank you very much for the question, because it will give me the opportunity to explain that in Quebec the situation is very different.

International students are not a revenue source. Our funding system is such that the revenue we receive from international students will be remitted back to the government, so we do not keep it.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Sure—I only have three minutes—but do you think it would help in other parts of the country if that were a disclosed component? I'm thinking about Universities Canada coming here. Wouldn't it be good if universities disclosed how much came from international students so that there could be an adequate public risk assessment?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: It's already disclosed. It's in all our financial statements.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Some are. Okay, great. Thank you.

Earlier you said that we're in the business of putting seats in classrooms, not in bedrooms. Would you support tying an institution's study permit allocation to student housing? It would provide guarantees, particularly for students in the first year and in areas with low vacancy rates.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We guarantee housing for all of our students in their first year.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Again, across the country, do you think it would make it easier for universities to advocate for the types of changes they've been advocating for in this committee if the concerns around housing were, perhaps, addressed in a formal recommendation to the government to have that guarantee? In other parts of the country, it's not.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: I'm not sure what your question is.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: My question is this: Concordia is part of the broader university ecosystem in Canada, and a rising tide floats all boats or sinks all boats. When we have groups such as Universities Canada coming and advocating for more student permits, and there's a perception that universities are profiting, even if yours isn't, from international students.... There are requests for stability in the programs. Wouldn't it be good to address some of those things writ large?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Actually, I heard—

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: I'm trying to give you an opportunity to say, “Yes, and Concordia is already doing this.” That is what I'm trying to do.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Actually, we're not advocating for more permits. What we're really advocating for is for you to improve our brand. Our brand has been destroyed.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: This is what I'm saying. Wouldn't a recommendation that would say, “We're going to tie permit levels to available housing in a region,” be great?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Rempel Garner.

Thank you, Ms. Diamantoudi.

We have three minutes left for Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Fragiskatos, go ahead.

Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much, Chair.

Professor Diamantoudi, thank you very much for being here today. At the outset of the previous exchange, you were trying to make a point on Quebec. I'll give you time to elaborate on that.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: Thank you.

In Quebec, the situation is very different. I understand the narrative around international students being a source of revenue. It is not a source of revenue for us in Quebec. The revenues we receive from international students we remit to the Government of Quebec. It goes back to the government, and it gets redistributed to all institutions, whether they have international students or not.

The reason we attract international students and we would like to bring them is that we don't have Canadian students to fill the gaps in our labs. This is the only reason. I'd like to say, from a provostal point of view, that when we admit students, I have absolutely no reason to prefer an international student over a Canadian student when the risk of their arriving in September at our doorstep is 50% less. It will be extremely disruptive. The only reason we do so is that we don't have Canadian students.

● (1735)

Peter Fragiskatos: It's an area of provincial jurisdiction, but I think colleagues will permit the question because it does relate to immigration.

We have seen in other parts of the country that, in fact, international students have been used as revenue streams, particularly in the college system but not exclusive to it. Do you think the model in Quebec has applicability beyond that province?

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: It would be a very interesting exercise to see whether that would actually completely change the incentives.

However, it is important to separate.... We're not all the same. There were bad actors in the system and, unfortunately, those bad actors have taken all of us down. We're now at the cusp of taking our own economy down. It's very important that we separate the issues here and that we treat international students with the role they truly should serve in our society, allow them to do so and encourage them to return to Canada.

Peter Fragiskatos: You speak from experience. You said you came here as an international student. We have about 40 seconds left.

I don't think you'll disagree that governments do need to take into account changing contexts and to adjust policy accordingly. Tell us about the value of an international student education, both for the student and also for the country.

Effrosyni Diamantoudi: We are a country built on diversity. We need to encourage that. This is our wealth. This is our richness, that we are very different and we bring our cultures together. This is what made me fall in love with Canada when I first came. This is what makes me a proud Canadian, that we embrace diversity. We embrace cultural diversity. I don't think it's time for us to backtrack on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Diamantoudi.

Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Thanks to all the witnesses for the excellent testimony.

Mr. Usmani, you have talked about the start-up visa program. One of your recommendations is that we should have a new one. There have been a number of testimonies here around a new start-up or a revised start-up visa program. If you have very specific recommendations that you would like to submit to our committee, we would love to consider them. It has been a topic of conversation.

With that, I want to thank you again for all of the excellent testimony and for your patience today.

This meeting is now adjourned.

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