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The Honourable Andrew Telegdi

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)): I would like to call the committee to order. We're going to be hearing witnesses once again on the whole issue of international credentials.

We have with us, from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, Madam Morris, who is president and CEO, and Karen McBride; from the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, Ken Potvin; from the Algonquin College School of Health and Community Studies, Carmen Hust, Marlene Tosh, Barbara Foulds, and Sylvie Lauzon; from the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, Nancy Worsfold, executive director, Jennifer McKenzie, and Luz Maria Alvarez Wilson. We also have John Melville, a cross-cultural education coordinator.

Not all the people are around the table, because we don't have enough room, but they will be coming up for the question part. I don't know how we will have more room during the questions, but that's what will happen.

Let's start with Madam Morris.

Ms. Claire Morris (President and CEO, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada): Good morning. Bonjour.

I'm very pleased to be here today with my colleagues from the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, the Algonquin College School of Health and Community Studies, and the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization in order to talk about how the Canadian education community can help in the integration of potential and current immigrants into Canadian society. Although Canadian educational institutions are not the main players with respect to entry into professional practice, foreign credential recognition is an important issue for us, and we are committed to helping find appropriate solutions.

I represent the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, known as AUCC, which is a non-governmental and not-for-profit group representing 92 Canadian public and private not-for-profit universities and university degree level colleges. AUCC's mandate is to facilitate the development of public policy on higher education and to encourage cooperation among universities and government, industry, communities, and institutions in other countries. Our advocacy ensures that higher education is recognized as vital to Canada's prosperity and quality of life as a knowledge-based society and economy.

For many years now AUCC has been actively engaged with key federal departments on several issues related to Canada's knowledge economy and skilled workforce. We work closely with officials at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, given the particular priority placed by our member institutions on the effective facilitation of international students' entry into and stay in Canada for academic studies.

Given the importance of the international student file, the university community has long advocated that Canada needs to be brought to a level playing field with regard to the recruitment of the best and brightest international students. A national approach to off-campus work provisions for international students and the ongoing reduction of permit processing times are central to this goal.

We believe as well that Canada needs to adopt a balanced approach when it comes to viewing international students as potential permanent residents, recognizing the equally important public policy benefit to Canada when these emerging leaders return to their home countries.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Given this long-standing engagement in a range of policy issues of interest to key departments and the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, AUCC and its members are well placed to be a partner in a current policy dialogue related to improving foreign credential recognition for new immigrants in Canada.

Members of AUCC's Standing Advisory Committee on International Relations – which is composed of 11 executive heads of member institutions – recently engaged in a policy discussion on the issue of foreign credential recognition for new immigrants to Canada and possible roles and implications for Canadian universities in order to suggest next steps for AUCC engagement in this area.

The challenges faced by immigrants in terms of recognition of foreign credentials are well documented. The lack of information about available programs and services, the lack of employer contacts and Canadian work experience, the lack of understanding of the culture of Canadian workplaces, and impracticable requirements for licensing and accreditation are a few examples.

AUCC and its members agree that, as education providers, universities have a particular role to play, first to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials for academic study at Canadian universities, and second, to facilitate academic recognition for entry into professional practice.

[English]

In fact, several Canadian universities are already actively engaged in foreign credential recognition initiatives. For example, AUCC members with medical schools are involved in national initiatives in the health sector. Provincial pilots such as the new bridge training initiatives in Ontario involve members such as the University of Toronto's pharmacy department, Ryerson University's social work and nutrition departments, and the University of Waterloo's optometry department. In addition, local community leadership councils organized by the Maytree Foundation involve yet other members.

Our brief outlines for you a number of the challenges faced by Canadian universities when it comes to foreign credential recognition, as well as the importance of building a solid knowledge base of university involvement in this area.

AUCC has recently submitted a proposal to HRSDC's foreign credential program aimed at developing a fuller diagnostic of Canadian university engagement in this area and capturing the challenges and opportunities related to facilitating recognition of foreign credentials for academic study at Canadian universities and academic recognition for entry into professional practice. We're hopeful this project will assist partners, among which are many educational institutions, to build a better understanding of Canadian universities' capacity, expertise, and key issues in this area. This is really an essential first step that we hope will inform the federal government's strategy and objectives with respect to foreign credential recognition.

As outlined in our brief, AUCC plans to undertake a detailed survey of member institutions on the scope of their activity related to foreign credential recognition, including online programs and services, offshore facilities, ESL, FSL and cross-cultural training, and provincial and national pilots. The exercise will culminate in a winter of 2006 round table aimed at promoting policy dialogue among key stakeholders, including selected policy makers and government departments, professional bodies, credential assessment agencies, and university presidents and registrars, and will identify those key issues with respect to foreign credential recognition and successful models in the Canadian university context.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that in fact Canadian universities are already actively involved in several foreign credential initiatives at the federal, provincial, and community levels, and along with AUCC are committed to working in partnership with other stakeholders to continue to identify the issues and barriers and to work towards appropriate solutions.

Once our survey, case studies, and national round table are completed, we'd welcome the opportunity to brief all the committee members on key results in order to share the ideas and possible approaches for universities' further involvement in foreign credential recognition.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

•(1115)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now we're going to move on to Mr. Potvin.

Mr. Ken Potvin (Executive Director, National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities): Thank you very much. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We certainly appreciate the opportunity to present to you today.

My name is Ken Potvin and I'm the executive director of the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, or NAPRA. We are the national voice of Canadian provincial and territorial pharmacy regulatory authorities, as well as the pharmacy services division of the Department of National Defence. These organizations are the licensing and regulatory bodies for the profession of pharmacy, as well as its practice environment, in their respective jurisdictions.

NAPRA was founded in 1995 to enable members to take a national approach in addressing common pharmacy regulatory issues. As will become apparent through this presentation, NAPRA and its voluntary members have an important role to play in ensuring that pharmacists licensed to practise in Canada provide safe and professional pharmacy services.

As reported in the Canadian Pharmacists Association's presentation to this committee on March 10, Canada is now facing a shortage of about 7% to 9% of the workforce, some 2,000 to 2,500 pharmacists. With the clear benefits of an expanded role for pharmacists in primary health care, as recommended in a number of recent key reports, pharmacy human resource issues will continue to grow. Given that there is a worldwide shortage of pharmacists, Canada cannot rely on international pharmacy graduates, or IPGs, as a sole means of meeting our growing needs, from either a practical or an ethical point of view. Furthermore, for every student admitted into the first year of one of Canada's nine pharmacy bachelor degree programs, there are five applicants turned away. These applicant numbers are up considerably over the last four years. Certainly there is no shortage of interested and qualified applicants for our domestic educational programs, but capacity is an issue.

These trends point to the need for a comprehensive health and human resource strategy for pharmacists, which should evolve from the proposed HRSDC sector study and health human resource database that is being developed with our cooperation by the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

NAPRA is well aware of the importance of the issues surrounding the recognition of international experience and credentials of immigrants. Although we appreciate the need to achieve immigration policy goals, we believe this must be accomplished within a framework that supports the regulatory bodies in ensuring that licensed pharmacy professionals provide competent patient care and that public protection is assured.

A successful applicant for a licence to practice pharmacy must meet a number of entry to practice competencies. NAPRA's professional competencies for Canadian pharmacists at entry to practice were developed through a coordinated effort between six national pharmacy organizations to fulfill several objectives, including the need to develop model programs and standards at the national level for provincial adoption. Finalized in 1997, these core competencies are integrated into the licensing standards and provide the foundation for several important documents, including the accreditation standards and guidelines for pharmacy professional degree programs at Canadian universities and the pharmacy examining board of Canada's qualifying examination. These competencies undergo periodic reviews, including one scheduled for later in 2005.

The pharmacy regulatory authorities believe that effective communication skills are essential for the practice of pharmacy. NAPRA influences these core communication requirements for obtaining a licence to practice through its language fluency requirements for licensure as a pharmacist in Canada. This report describes the competency requirements related to pharmacists' ability to demonstrate comprehension and fluency in written and verbal English or French. The primary intent of the NAPRA report is to provide a consistent standard for pharmacy regulators across Canada in the licensure of pharmacists. In addition to the above, NAPRA has also established requirements for structured practical training programs across Canada.

Clearly, NAPRA's work impacts the core requirements for all pharmacists, whether domestic or foreign graduates, seeking to obtain a licence to practice in Canada. This assessment process is not designed to impede IPG licensure but rather to ensure that all licensed pharmacists possess the skills and knowledge to provide a high quality of care to their patients and to assure public protection.

• (1120)

One of NAPRA's key accomplishments over the past decade has been facilitating the signing of a mutual recognition agreement or MRA. The MRA is a model licensure agreement that all provinces, except Quebec, signed in 2000 to support the interprovincial mobility of pharmacists. Pharmacists wishing to relocate from one MRA signatory province to another are recognized as having been evaluated against the same entry-to-practice criteria, which underscores the importance of national consistency.

Based on our members' collective experience, the most significant challenges for IPGs in Canada relate to communication skills and to understanding our social, cultural, and health care systems, as well as to learning about disease states and treatments they may not have encountered in their country of origin.

NAPRA and its members have a proven track record of working with IPGs to clearly describe the requirements for assessment and licensure and to identify assistance available through various employers and government agencies. The NAPRA website is very helpful and informative in this regard. However, more needs to be done to effectively integrate IPGs into the Canadian health care environment. In taking on this challenge, however, we must uphold consistent core competency requirements and recognize the need for increased capacity in our domestic educational programs.

We believe that acting on the following recommendations will make a positive impact on the licensing process and on the successful practice integration of international pharmacy graduates in Canada: first, to allocate funds for cultural adjustment programs, so that IPGs can better integrate into our health care system; second, to allocate funds to develop a national language benchmark for pharmacy practice to ensure national consistency and increase the coordination of fluency requirements with other health professions; third, to explore remediation opportunities and work with unsuccessful IPG candidates who are already residing in Canada but are not able to obtain licensure to help them meet the core competency and licensing requirements; fourth, to consider strategies to more effectively integrate IPGs into leadership and mentorship positions; and last, to support HRSDC funding for the proposed sector study of pharmacy human resources in Canada.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present to you today on behalf of NAPRA.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we are going to go on to Algonquin College and Ms. Hust.

Ms. Carmen Hust (Foreign-Trained Nurse Project Lead, Algonquin College School of Health and Community Studies): Thank you very much.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about our project at Algonquin College for foreign-trained nurses. What I will be presenting to you is actually a model of how one can attain foreign credential recognition. It's more of an actual model.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Good morning. Thank you for inviting us to talk about our project, which has been designed to help foreign-trained nurses.

This project deals with the many barriers nurses have to overcome, and especially the recognition of foreign education and experience. Since I have a seven minute time limit, I would rather go on in English, but if you like to ask questions in French after my presentation, I will answer in French.

[*English*]

For the rest of the presentation I will present in English because of the seven-minute limit.

I would like to bring to your attention something that is in our brief. You did receive a schematic that represents our project. I also brought more information today, but I understand that it all would have had to be translated in order to be shared with the group. I hope it does get translated, because there's a particular schematic that describes how we use prior learning assessment and recognition to attain foreign credential recognition at Algonquin. It's truly a hands-on model.

As you know, there are shortages of professionals in our country, particularly in nursing. Unlike the need in other professions, the need for nurses is not met domestically. We have nursing seats in our schools that are empty, and we cannot fill them domestically. One of our solutions has been to look for resources within Canada, those being nurses who have chosen to immigrate to Canada but have met numerous barriers and cannot practice.

Those barriers have been mentioned already by my colleagues. These nurses lack the information needed to understand how one becomes regulated here, such as how one attains work in Canada. Another barrier is tools for academic foreign credential recognition. Language also is an issue, be it French or English. There is supplementary bridging education, which, in the case of nursing, might be mental health or other things. In their country, they would have had training; however, there are aspects that are different here. Of course, then there's the Canadian work experience.

We also know our new immigrant nurses face enormous challenges because usually they were the ticket into Canada. They were expected to work when they came here, so the disillusionment they face is great.

They also don't understand our health care system, which was alluded to as well. Also, they don't necessarily understand how one works within a multicultural setting.

One of the cornerstones in our project is that we do use prior learning assessment and recognition to attain foreign credential recognition. Participants in our project do leave with Algonquin College's diploma, certificate, or University of Ottawa degree.

Our nurses do have choices. They do receive sector-specific ESL. Recognizing that most nurses do come with an intermediate level of language, they just don't have enough to work in the professional sector. They have to have supports, which they attain, and they have to be able to realize their dreams. Our project does that.

I bring the schematic to your attention. When they come into our project, nurses are first assessed by our regulatory body. They are nurses in their country of origin, not physicians or anything else. This project is specifically for nurses.

They are assessed for their language skills, using the Canadian language benchmark tool. If they score at an intermediate level, they will receive additional sector-specific language skills.

They are then offered the opportunity to challenge one of our programs, be it the certificate as a personal supports worker, the diploma in practical nursing, or the degree in nursing. And if you'll notice, they do all of these in a lot less time than needed for the original degree or diploma, because we use prior learning assessment.

Nurses are asked to develop professional portfolios in which they have evidence that describes what they do bring from their country. They will come into simulated labs where they will demonstrate what they know. If they can demonstrate the same learning outcomes that are present in our degrees, diplomas, or certificates, they will receive credit for that. That's basically how our project works. We also use the services of World Education Services' academic credential assessment. The nurses might also have a test to

demonstrate what they know. And then there's interviewing. All of this becomes part of their professional portfolio.

In the last three years since our project began, 97 nurses have come to Ottawa and are now working in our sector. These nurses are employed in our community. We know that before our program existed, 70% of nurses who attempted our national board exam were unsuccessful. After completing a project like ours, 70% are successful. So it's not 100%, but it's a lot better. And all of our participants are employed in the health care sector.

I was asked to speak, too, to some of the shortcomings. After coming through our projects, what are the other things that we feel still need to be done? We need to see that all internationally educated professionals receive the information they need when they come, at the point of contact with Immigration. They need to understand our regulatory bodies. They need to understand how one becomes employed here. They need to understand our language requirements too. They face disillusionment when they have language from their countries, and then they come here and they say, "Well, it's not enough". They need to understand what they need for their profession.

We need to revisit perhaps some of our visa policies in the sense that part-time study should be allowed. Many of our nurses come as domestic workers, and they cannot go to school, but they could be working on their language skills at that point.

We also need to look at part-time studies and consider providing student loans for them, because most of our internationally educated nurses cannot afford full-time study. We need to revisit PLAR—prior learning assessment—how we fund PLAR. We need to also look at standardization of courses for internationally educated nurses across this country, because it is not unusual for nurses to come from Toronto even to finish their project here in Ottawa, and they run into barriers between two schools.

Standardized regulatory processes between regulatory bodies across the country too are a necessity. I think colleges and universities need to have funding for counselling positions for internationally educated professionals. These programs need people to help explain the process, the options available to them.

We need funding for mentoring programs. We also need funding to support sensitization of the workforce to the new workforce. To date very little has been done. Our employers, our hospitals, do not know what the new workforce will look like and how to incorporate them into their workforce. We also need funding for additional ESL at a more advanced level. Our nurses are aspiring to positions of leadership, and they need the language to get there.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak.

● (1130)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Worsfold, go ahead, please.

Ms. Nancy Worsfold (Executive Director, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization): Thank you.

I'm afraid I'm going to repeat a little bit of what you said, but I'll be taking it from a slightly different angle.

Thank you, merci beaucoup, for this opportunity to share our insights and experiences on the topic of barriers to new immigrants in the Canadian labour market.

The Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization is the largest immigrant settlement agency in Ottawa. Last year we served over 17,000 clients in individual, group, and classroom settings. Our employment programs are managed through a partnership called LASI- WorldSkills Staffing Services.

Based on our experience, we've identified five barriers, and we would like to make eleven recommendations. We would like to categorize the barriers as soft skill gaps, hard skill gaps, survival, discrimination, and the lack of recognition of educational credentials.

I'd like to dispose of the last issue quickly. You've already heard quite a lot about the lack of recognition of credentials from other presenters. Although it is a very important factor, it's not the single most important issue facing our clients in the labour market, with the exception of a few regulated professions. The majority of jobs are not in regulated professions—business managers, sales professionals, researchers, and so on—and focusing only on the issue of credentials hides some other more complex issues facing our clients.

A soft skills gap, that is, lack of knowledge of the Canadian labour market and work culture, is a barrier faced by almost all of our clients. Small cultural misunderstandings can mean the difference between getting an interview or not, between retaining a job or not. To address these issues, the federal government should consider funding intensive employment support and career counselling. Currently, the immigrant employment programs in Ottawa, both those funded by CIC and HRSDC, are based on high-volume models of service, disallowing ongoing or individual coaching. It doesn't make sense. Cultural adaptation takes time, takes attention to detail.

There need to be internship opportunities. Giving immigrants an opportunity to actively participate in the Canadian work environment would help new comers learn about work culture and would provide that much needed Canadian work experience.

Also for the soft skills, there is mentoring. We're having some success with a small, United Way-funded mentorship program that matches immigrant women with people who are already established in their professional fields. We know that many studies have shown that this mentoring is a kind of support that works.

But there are real skill gaps, such as language ability or the latest technology, that are barriers for our clients. Employers are impatient; they don't want to train. So, for example, an internationally trained accountant can be blocked from jobs because he doesn't know the latest North American software packages. All levels of government need to improve and strengthen the delivery of upgrade training.

There needs to be better coordination of employment programming. The employment programming, whether it be financed by federal, provincial, or municipal governments, needs to be better coordinated. I could tell you stories about the programming in Ottawa that would make you cry.

The federal government needs to revisit the eligibility criteria for the employment support programs. HRSDC, for example, would

exclude a foreign-trained doctor working at Tim Horton's from employment support programming because he or she does not fit the definition of unemployed.

But program design for training is closely related to the next and I think least recognized barrier, which is survival. A huge barrier facing our clients is financial and, dare we say it, spiritual survival. Most immigrants come to Canada educated and experienced; that's who the point system favours. Adult immigrants with family responsibilities quickly become caught up in the treadmill of Canada's low-wage economy and poverty.

Outside Quebec there is no living allowance for immigrants who are learning English or French. It was cut in the early 1990s. Our students often drop out before they reach a level of English that would allow them to access professional employment because they need to eat. So they take a job, any job, and once they are working it's hard to continue any kind of training because of schedules, child care, transportation, and exhaustion.

Consider this comparison. Canadians who lose good jobs have access to financial support through EI while they look for new jobs. And they can access \$8,000 or \$10,000 worth of training paid for by HRSDC. That is what's available to those who are attached long enough to the labour market to qualify for employment insurance.

• (1135)

For a new immigrant who has no attachment to the Canadian labour market, no established network of contacts, and who may have a skills gap, there's almost nothing available—no income support, no free training, except for basic English, and no personalized professional career counselling—just a few workshops.

So we would like you to revisit the legislation governing the unemployment insurance fund. There is already an exception made for aboriginals and for youth allowing them to access programming that includes income support, and we recommend that you add new immigrants to that list.

If you will allow us the indulgence, we want to speak briefly of spiritual survival and how things have changed.

Coming to Canada, whether as an immigrant or a refugee, is a profoundly hopeful act. It's a huge risk, a step into the unknown, taken by people brave enough and hopeful enough that they can build a better life for their family. Fifteen years ago there was never talk of people giving up and going home, but now there is. Fifteen years ago we weren't dealing with anger, but now we are—real, bitter, destructive anger from immigrants who feel they've been duped by Canada. Recently we had to put in a buzzer system in our interview rooms at our agency because of the rage our clients are experiencing. Fifteen years ago there were issues of sadness, even depression, but now we see too many people losing hope.

The profound disappointment experienced by so many of our clients is a cancer that we must come to grips with or it will affect the future of our whole country. A significant part of the disappointment and anger experienced by our clients is a result of coming face to face with discrimination and racism.

Canada has a reputation in the world as being a beacon of human rights. Newcomers are not prepared for the racism they experience in Canada. It is a significant barrier in the labour market. We have employers who want to see only Canadian experience, hiring managers who are intolerant of accents, supervisors who think their customers won't accept seeing a woman in a head scarf. There's a great deal of discrimination, and the federal government needs to deal with it.

There needs to be more public education, education for employers, for co-workers, and for the general public. We would recommend that you spend as much on anti-racism as you spend on anti-smoking. We know there was an announcement yesterday of new money, but I hope that's just a beginning.

We also need stronger and more accessible human rights and employment equity legislation.

Finally, we need to ask you to look within yourselves as a federal government. Policy makers and governments talk about this issue as if it is a problem out there with big corporations. As a service provider in Ottawa, we can tell you with absolute certainty that the for-profit corporations here are not the problem. The big problem in our community is the public and para-public employers—the federal, provincial, and municipal civil services; the school boards; universities; colleges; hospitals; and all of the other not-for-profit employers.

To remedy this we have three final recommendations.

The federal government could develop extensive mentoring and internship programs of their own. You could create opportunities for accountants in Revenue Canada, for geographers in Parks Canada, and so on. The federal government should use its spending power to insist that bodies receiving transfer payments also address this issue. And finally, the federal government should meet its own employment equity targets.

In closing, OCISO's recommendations can be summarized as more programming and more justice. To address the very significant problems facing immigrants in the labour market, we need both.

Thank you.

• (1140)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

At this point we're going to go into our round of questions and answers.

The first round is each party and the time is seven minutes—for the questions and the answers. After that we go into a second round, which is five minutes.

We're going to be starting off with Ms. Ablonczy.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to ask a question to each of the presenters. We really appreciate this information. I've learned quite a bit from all your presentations, and I've been at this a while, because this seems to be a moving target, this whole area of credentials.

With respect to the universities, the recognition of academic training seems to be a real problem for a number of people coming

into the country, and I'm glad to see there is some coordination happening. I see that the round table results won't be ready for basically another year, and I'm just wondering, what do you think realistically is going to happen internationally? Is there going to be some kind of international clearinghouse that can compare and contrast economic credentials, or do we have to do this on a case-by-case basis and have every country reinvent the wheel? It just seems to be so uncertain for academically trained people coming to Canada.

Can you give me some idea about whether there's going to be some international consistency? Is there a body that compares and contrasts training levels?

The Chair: Ms. Morris.

Ms. Claire Morris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I might ask Karen McBride, our vice-president of international affairs, to join us at the table here because she can speak in far more detail than I can about the number of initiatives that are happening internationally for us to try to build a level of consistency in terms of recognition of qualifications.

The Bologna process is a fairly fast-moving process where an attempt is being made to build some sort of level playing field of recognition so there is an ability not to do it on a case-by-case basis but rather to have some accepted standards. Perhaps Karen can add a little more depth to that.

Ms. Karen McBride (Vice-President, International Affairs, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada): Thank you.

It's a very pertinent question, in particular since UNESCO and the OECD are currently developing guidelines for countries with respect to facilitating cross-border movement of credential holders. The two bodies anticipate that these guidelines will be approved, I believe, by the autumn of this year, and then they will look to their member countries to make certain these guidelines are implemented.

One of the initiatives planned under these guidelines is the building of a database of recognized higher education institutions around the world. One of the challenges for the academic recognition of credentials at the moment is the growing diversity of higher education providers around the world, some of which are bogus providers. This international effort spearheaded by UNESCO and the OECD is meant to bring a greater level of credibility to the institutions that are registered in the database so institutions in Canada, for example, can consult this database and feel something is a credible institution. This is always the very first thing university registrars need to understand in order to facilitate the recognition of a credential they have in front of them. So there is movement afoot, spearheaded by the OECD and UNESCO, to try to facilitate—exactly how you put it—an international clearing house of information on institutions recognized in their countries as legitimate providers of higher education.

I might also add quickly, if I could, that as a result of UNESCO conventions there is already a network of information centres on international credentials, one of which is in Canada. It's called the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, and the committee may have already heard from that organization, which is affiliated with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. That body is linked and networked with other similar bodies around the world so they can exchange information in order to facilitate the academic recognition of credentials.

• (1145)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: That's very helpful.

With respect to NAPRA, you talk about HRDC funding for a proposed sector study of pharmacy. We keep hearing this from different groups: if only there was a labour market study, or we need to know where we're at. I wonder if you could just tell the committee what this study is going to entail and why it's important that it be funded, because we might have some influence with HRDC, who knows?

Mr. Ken Potvin: I'll preface my remarks by saying I've been in my position for five months, so I'm still getting oriented on a number of our initiatives.

This sector study has been on the table for a couple of years now. There's actually a research proposal that's part of this study that's been submitted to HRSDC. There's a contribution agreement that has been signed, but the moneys haven't flowed yet. It's very close to completion, but it just seems to keep hitting these slight hurdles as we get to the very end.

The intent of the study is to look at the use of pharmacists and pharmacy technical staff—the technicians—to look at the current needs and deficiencies in terms of the labour force and to develop a model to predict the future needs of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in a revised, reformed health system. It's similar to the medical studies that have been done for physicians and nurses; it looks at pharmacy as an employment sector.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: For Algonquin College, you mentioned to us a presentation, a bridging program, and how there's going to be some sharing of lessons learned from the program. When did this program begin? What's the cost per person to bring someone successfully through it, and when is this presentation going to take place?

Ms. Carmen Hust: The project was initially funded by the Ontario provincial government's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It began in 2002, and it is coming to a close on March 31. There will be a how-to manual that I will share with anyone who wants to see it. It will be published on March 31.

As far as cost per pathway or option, a PSW certificate is \$800. The various options are shown on the diagram in my brief. The PN diploma is about \$2,500. The BScN degree is \$10,000. The PN to BScN, which is the bridge from the diploma to the BScN, is \$14,000. PREP is a unique cluster of courses to help a person who has an equivalent education already but who we know needs help in order to pass the board exam and integrate into the workforce. Basically, that's a cluster.

• (1150)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: It's very helpful to have those numbers. Thank you.

I wish I could get to the last presenter, but I'm sure my time is up.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank our witnesses for appearing this morning. There are so many questions one should ask in various sectors. We all know that the recognition of international credentials... We are experiencing the terrible impact of this problem. We should be talking instead about the non-recognition of foreign credentials.

There have been a number of presentations, including that of the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization. You mentioned five barriers, including skill gaps and survival. This is a very strong word. Could you give a few examples where the survival of people is really at stake?

You also mentioned that you have to deal with situations of destructive anger and rage. This seems to be rather extreme. Do you really have to deal with this kind of situation?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: If you're asking me if we're exaggerating, the answer is no, we're not.

A family of four that immigrates here as an independent will arrive in Canada with a certain amount of money, which is governed by the rules. It's about \$15,000. So the family of four arrives here in Ottawa. They have their bags with them, but they have to rent an apartment, find and furnish a place to live—though they can often do that second hand and so on.

They're coming with their \$15,000. When you look at exchange rates from other countries, \$15,000 Canadian is the life savings of persons from many of our source countries, like the third world countries—China, India, and so on and. It often represents a person's life savings, and in Canada, supporting a family of four, setting up a life here, burns it up really fast. Folks don't come here to live on social assistance.

We have three locations of language classes in Ottawa. We have at any one time about 150 students. A very small percentage of those are on social assistance. Most of them are either living on their savings or have one member of the family working.

The reality is that the pressure to make money is an absolute one on families. That's why you have so many personal assistance workers who are foreign-trained nurses and why it's so hard for them to get out of it; it's because they have to eat. Immigrants don't come to Canada to take social assistance. That's the only thing available. For an unemployed Canadian, there's EI, which is a bit different—and it feels different from welfare—but for them, that's it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: You said that you had 17,000 clients last year. On the other hand, you seem to be saying that the federal government does not do its share when it comes to employment equity. Is this a criticism that will still be valid next year or two years from now, or do you think the federal government could do better in matters of employment equity to correct certain problems?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: As a service provider in Ottawa where the single largest employer is the federal government, it is a real problem here. The federal government absolutely excludes people who don't have their citizenship. But even with folks who have been here long enough to have citizenship, not a lot of former immigrants, now citizens, are hired by the federal government either. So I hope that will be remedied in the future. There's an ongoing discussion with the federal government about their hiring practices, as I'm sure you know.

On equity in the different ways services are provided, as I mentioned, I find it grossly unfair that an unemployed Canadian has access to so much service compared to a new immigrant. I think we need to rethink how we give services through Citizenship and Immigration, HRDC, and frankly, also through the provincial government and the city, because they don't work together very well.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: My question is for the AUCC. Did it take a stand on off-campus work for international students?

Right now, international students cannot work off-campus. There are a few very limited pilot projects. Where does the AUCC stand?

Ms. Claire Morris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The AUCC position is that all international students should have the same opportunities throughout Canada. In other words, these projects are a good thing, but we demand that they be provided throughout this country, so that all international students can work off campus.

Mr. Roger Clavet: Essentially, you are suggesting that the government should go a step further with this experiment.

Do you have a timeline for your comprehensive survey of the recognition of international credentials? This seems to be a very ambitious initiative. When can we expect to have your findings?

Ms. Claire Morris: Right now, we are waiting for the approval by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. As soon as the project is underway, we will first have a diagnosis of the situation right now, since many of our universities are already involved in this. We need to document the involvement of different universities. Some of them have implemented bridging programs, and others have a rather sophisticated way of recognizing international credentials. We need to put of all that together and make a more thorough examination of five specific cases in order to document projects that meet with a certain degree of success.

The third stage will be a roundtable of experts from throughout Canada. We expect this to happen in the Spring of 2006. Once all the stages are completed, we will be ready to appear before the

committee. So, we are waiting for the approval and funding of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to be able to advance our project.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank all of the presenters this morning. They were all very helpful presentations, and I know they'll be important to the committee.

I want to go back to Ms. Worsfold and the OCISO presentation. I appreciate your clarity with all of the recommendations you presented. I think there are some very helpful things there.

Certainly with regard to employment programs and the EI fund, there's dramatic money there.

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: We know that.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Money that has been collected from employers and employees just isn't being spent on employment programs, so I think that's an interesting suggestion, given that situation.

I also recognized yesterday, as you did, the program on racism that was announced by the Minister of Multiculturalism. It's great. It's nice that there's some money there. It's nice that there's a bit of a plan, but we're still not back to where we were in the early 1990s when programming on racism was cut back so dramatically. So while it's great to have some movement, and hopefully it will help address some of the issues you have raised, I still don't think it's going quite far enough.

In terms of the disillusionment and anger of people, do you notice it among a particular group of immigrants, or is it generally across all groups? Are there particular countries of origin where it's been more of a problem? We've heard mostly about professional immigrants having this kind of frustration, but you're certainly talking about all immigrants facing this. I'm just wondering if you can expand on whether you hear it from any particular group, or what particular concerns they're raising.

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: I was referring specifically to workforce-destined people being angry with their experience with the workforce. If you're talking about categories of people, certainly it's the independents, who went through a system, who felt that they were selected on their background and their education and aren't able to use that education here, who are angry. For people coming through the family class, it's not the same thing. They're coming with a different attachment to Canada. It's a very different thing. It's the disappointment faced by our clients, which is very profound.

• (1200)

Mr. Bill Siksay: So it's the disconnect between thinking you have so many points to immigrate to Canada, in the point system, and the reality of the workplace here in Canada when you get here.

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: Also, frankly, as far as I can tell, most people who immigrate as independents use agents and consultants overseas. Those agents and consultants promise the world to people, and the Canadian embassies say they can't do anything about it because they're private businesses and they're not in Canada, but people believe them—and of course they're paying them lots of money, right? If you're paying \$5,000 to a consultant who's going to help you through the system, you probably believe what they're saying. They're selling a product, and that product is getting you through the system.

Mr. Bill Siksay: So are you seeing a marked difference then in the settlement capacity of independent applicants versus family class applicants? Is that a change in that kind of circumstance?

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: Let me describe two people and the way I would see it. Say you have one person who was selected through the point system, has an advanced engineering degree, and is driving a taxi and making \$30,000 a year, who's angry and it's affecting his ability to parent his children, it's affecting his marriage, he's disappointed, and he feels he's wasted his degree. Compare that to somebody who comes through family class, who might be working in a restaurant and making \$15,000 but feeling that this is kind of what they were expecting; the family is doing okay, so they're happy and they're looking forward to better things for their kids. Under the studies that Immigration Canada would do, the taxi driver making the \$30,000 is more successful than the restaurant worker making the \$15,000, but the restaurant worker may be happier and, from our point of view, may be better settled, because they're living their life.

So it depends what you define as “settled”. Do independents do better in the labour market? I think there is an indication that they do make a bit more money, but that doesn't mean they're effectively settled.

Mr. Bill Siksay: When you mentioned your fourth recommendation, about coordination of employment programming, you said you could tell us stories that would make us cry. Can you expand a little bit on what your experience of that has been?

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: Just as an example, at Bayshore, which is a region of Ottawa, I can't tell you if they have that today, but at least two years ago they would have two English classes side by side, both teaching level 2/3. One would be federally funded and one would be provincially funded. It would be much more pedagogically sound to have a level 2 class and then a level 3 class, but because of the eligibility criteria of the students in the class, the adults in the class, you have to have a level 2/3 in the federally funded one and a level 2/3 in the provincially funded one, even though you could have had a full class of level 2 and a full class of level 3. That's just dumb.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Ms. Hust, your list of shortcomings was long but very helpful in terms of issues that needed to be addressed. One of them was the situation of domestic workers and visa study requirements, that it's not easy or it's impossible to get a visa to study. I wonder if you could expand on that. I think it's something we've heard about before and know it is a particular problem in your area.

Ms. Carmen Hust: Many of the nurses arrive and say, “Okay, I'll come as a domestic worker, because I can come”, but their intention is to be a nurse again, and they want to be a nurse as soon as

possible. They're willing to do their two years as a domestic worker, but then once they can immigrate, they want to continue.

During that time period, they could be working on their language, because most of these nurses come with an intermediate level, that basic level that you spoke to, but that basic is at a 5/6 level in the Canadian language benchmarks. You need a benchmark 8/9 to practise professionally. So this is two years of time during which they could be doing that, and currently they can't.

• (1205)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Beaumier.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West, Lib.): Welcome, and thank you.

I will just follow up on that a little bit. You're talking about someone who applies to come to Canada as a domestic worker, and when they get here you think their status should be changed so they can then become a student.

Ms. Carmen Hust: No, I'm saying they have every intention of being a domestic worker, and that's what they want to do. But could they not, in their spare time, work on their language requirements, so once they finished their two years as a domestic worker they could work in their actual profession?

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I'm not aware of anything that would prevent them from going to night school or weekend school to improve their language. If in fact that's true, it would be—

Ms. Carmen Hust: Currently it's my understanding that that's not working for the internationally educated. I understand they are excluded from the LINC program.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: In Brampton they're not.

A voice: They are.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I will follow up on that and look into it.

Government hiring practices don't exclude people who aren't Canadian citizens. I want to go on record as saying that.

I feel as if I'm being really argumentative, but this is something that has been a passion of mine for 12 years, so I'm very anxious to see how we can incorporate people faster.

To the universities, the nurses, and the pharmacy associations, I really appreciate the fact that you have acknowledged this need and have worked toward doing something concrete. What I want to know is basically a simple question. If I'm a registered nurse in the Philippines or somewhere and I come to Canada, if my language skills are good enough, can I immediately apply to be tested for qualification, or do I still have to go through this process of 18 months to be a registered nurse?

Ms. Carmen Hust: The first step in the process is that one is assessed by the regulatory body. In our situation, the regulatory body is the College of Nurses of Ontario.

There are three criteria for entry into practice, to be allowed to write the board exam. One is that you have an equivalent education, and it's the college that deems yes or no. The second one is that you have recent practice. You must have practised within the last five years to be eligible to write that board exam. If you have not practised in the last five years, you will need to take some courses to be current—

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: So you must have practised in your country of origin?

Ms. Carmen Hust: Correct.

The third criterion is that you can prove fluency in either French or English. Those are the three criteria.

For many of our internationally educated nurses, perhaps the immigration process itself bumps them out of the recent practice category. By the time they get here, become settled or whatever, and go through their domestic worker permit, they are outside the five-year window and find themselves in a situation where they have to take some courses to prove recent practice.

• (1210)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I understood from your presentations today that UNESCO is currently working on an international body to evaluate educational institutions around the world. Is that correct?

Ms. Claire Morris: The point we were making is that UNESCO and OECD are working on quality assurance guidelines that will be able to convey the status of recognized institutions internationally. Karen made the point that often the first step in recognizing the validity of a degree or an educational background is recognizing the validity of the institution from which it was obtained. So that's a very active piece of work that's ongoing right now.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: It's ongoing, so there isn't something right now that would—

Ms. Claire Morris: Karen may want to add to this, but I think the expectation is that those guidelines have been through enough of a consultation process that they are ready to be adopted and accepted. They would exist as the guidelines that every country would agree to follow in terms of the quality assurance of its institutions.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I think that's a really good step for us. I think one of the first cases that horrified me was my paper boy, who was a doctor from Poland. He came to collect and said he was leaving for the States, because within six months he'd be practising medicine in the States.

So the need is certainly there.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now we're going into our five-minute rounds.

Mr. Mark.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming here this morning. Certainly your presence has reminded all of us that immigrants are people first, and not just immigrants, whether they have a credential problem or not. I've been in Ottawa almost eight years. I ride the cabs a lot, and in eight years the same questions have come up. You have engineers, so-called

doctors, driving taxi cabs. And Bill C-11 was just recently passed, in the last couple of years.

Do you think it's irresponsible for the government to assign points based on...perhaps they're not validating the universities that people say they graduated from? Why do we have the problem? The problem continues to be quite large, even though we restructured the instrument for immigration.

Do you think the government should be more accountable?

Ms. Luz Maria Alvarez Wilson (Member of the Board, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization): Could I respond to that?

I am an immigrant myself. I do believe the federal government is a little bit immoral in this practice. I'm sorry it's such a harsh term, but we are talking about people who have a dream to come to Canada to build a better life.

When I've talked to some Canadians they've referred to the fact that their parents came the same way, that we are all immigrants, but the requirements the parents had were totally different. So it is wonderful to have an open house for a newcomer who aspires to work hard and make a life, but to have someone who has invested a great deal of money to come to Canada for a better life discover that he doesn't have any potential for the rest of his life is immoral, in my opinion. It is definitely immoral.

Mr. Inky Mark: Do you believe it's the adjustment process, or is it the skills that immigrants bring with them that create the problem?

Ms. Luz Maria Alvarez Wilson: I think it's the survival situation, when you take into consideration that you are going to arrive in Canada and you need time for settlement, definitely. You come with \$15,000 at the most, and you need to settle yourself, and all of a sudden you have all of these professional barriers.

The Conference Board of Canada has already mentioned how much Canada is losing in income because they are not taking advantage. Just to give an example, I have been living in Canada for 18 years, initially as a diplomat. I have been looking for a job for a year and a half. I can't find a job. So what I'm going to do now is put all of my life savings into a business. I have to procure myself employment, but most people cannot afford that.

Mr. Inky Mark: My fear is that if the government goes to an external screening process—in other words, your credentials are screened before you land in this country—the problem will be that we'll reduce substantially the number of people coming into this country.

So is it an internal professional problem, or is it a problem with the applicants who are applying without the credentials?

• (1215)

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: I think it's a labour market problem more than anything. The regulated professions are particular, and there are many barriers there. I think your example of the paper boy who can be practising medicine in the U.S. in six months is very real. We know lots of examples of folks going to the U.S., where it is easier.

But most people aren't in regulated professions, and they're experiencing the same barriers. Personally, I think a lot of it is...we have to be talking about discrimination. If you have a white Canadian kid who decides to go to Oxford to do their degree, they come back home and it's "Oh, wow, international experience". You have a black person from Africa with a degree from Oxford and it's "Oh, I don't know, foreign credentials". We see that constantly in the labour market.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Thank you.

The comments made by Ken—he mentioned increased capacity of domestic training programs—interested me, because it appears we are really only dealing with an element of an obviously wider picture, which is of course the lack of people entering these professions from whatever source, whether it be international or domestic Canadian sources.

You talked about this in terms of the ethical point of view with respect to looking overseas to attract people from countries that obviously also have needs for pharmacists, and you talked about the international shortage of pharmacists worldwide. From what I took your remarks to mean, we are attracting people from countries that need pharmacists, getting them into Canada, and then not using them according to the skills they have developed.

I wonder why there is this shortage of capacity in domestic training programs that you have outlined. It seems to me strange that you should give a figure of five to one—five applicants, one acceptance for training in Canada, and four rejections. Why is that?

Mr. Ken Potvin: It's actually six to one, if you look at it that way: there are five rejected for every applicant that is accepted. I don't know if the AUCC would speak to that, but I think funding of university-based positions for professions is a provincial government issue, in terms of how many spaces are actually available.

We don't have a lack of interest for applicants into the pharmacy program from our high schools and our other university programs. Most of them require at least two years of initial undergraduate university experience before they can apply to the professional program. So it's not a lack of applicants, and certainly the qualifications are there for those applicants. It's a lack of numbers of positions.

One of the observations I would make is that there isn't enough evidence to convince, I suppose, the ministries or the universities that they need more positions within those programs. That's why we need a comprehensive health human resource study such as the pharmacy sector study I alluded to, to demonstrate that for the projected needs for the profession of pharmacy we just don't have enough capacity within our universities.

Hon. David Anderson: Yes, which is again another subset of the domestic Canadian issue, as opposed to the international.

I would certainly like to congratulate you and others as well for the emphasis in today's session on some of the ethical aspects of immigration, the way we handle immigrants unfairly—in fact in some respects far worse than that—and also with respect to what we

might be doing for countries overseas in denying them the qualified people they need.

I understand the situation, however, is quite the reverse for nursing schools, as Ms. Hust mentioned. There you have nursing seats that are empty in schools. Could you give me some indication why that is? Why would this profession be so unpopular to qualified Canadian applicants?

Ms. Carmen Hust: It's a domestic issue as well.

Hon. David Anderson: But is there something structural? Is there something we are attempting to patch up with immigration that is much more structural and about which we should be doing something else as well as trying to simply...? If immigrants come and you get them into nursing, but the profession itself has things wrong with it, they won't stay either—or if they do, they won't be happy there.

My question is, have we a structural problem, which really has to go well beyond immigration?

• (1220)

Ms. Carmen Hust: I think what's happened in the profession on the whole is this. The people who are drawn to nursing initially have over the decades been caring people. I think today there are many caring professions that are now available to people who would have maybe considered nursing at one point in time. There is physiotherapy, occupational therapy, massage therapy—there are many. Nursing itself by nature is a 24/7 job. It's not necessarily that attractive, as other of these professions could be perhaps, where they could be more of an independent practitioner. That might be one cause.

There are very large issues in terms of full-time employment in nursing as well. There are many issues around that element.

Hon. David Anderson: Thank you.

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

Monsieur Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to go back to something in the brief of the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization. Even if we do not have anything against businesses like Tim Hortons, the fact that foreign-trained physicians have to work there is a huge problem. On top of that, those people are excluded from employment support programs.

You are going beyond that and you are telling us that we should re-examine the EI fund legislation. Exceptions are made for aboriginals and for youth. Likewise, exceptions could be made for new immigrants so that they can access support programs. During the time before the issue of international credentials is settled, could such measures be used to correct this injustice, at least partially? Could a change in the EI criteria for these people be a step in the right direction for the federal government? Unfortunately, those people are grossly under-employed.

[English]

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: Just to explain, HRDC has two pots of money that it spends on employment programming. The employment support programs, which do not involve income assistance, are available to people who, under the definition, are unemployed. They don't have to be EI eligible, but they have to be unemployed.

Through WorldSkills, we manage programming. We are not allowed to serve clients who are working more than 20 hours a week, which is a problem for us as a delivery agent because a lot of our clients are working, but outside of their profession. But, yes, they're excluded by the rules. We've complained about it and been told, well, tough, those are the rules.

That's the smaller part of the employment support programming. In the big pot—the employment insurance pot—are programs to which income assistance is attached. I think it would help a great deal if new immigrants were added to the list of exceptions. I don't think it would completely remedy the problem, but it would allow for a great deal of programming.

I know well the program that Carmen's talking about. It was a great program, but as she mentioned, the money is over. It was a three-year project. It's done, cooked. I think we need things that are ongoing, which will last.

I don't want to give too many examples, but through WorldSkills we also did a teacher retraining program in partnership with Queen's University. It's the same funding source; it's over this summer. We will have retrained 96 people. Well, 96 people is, for them, fabulous, but for the other I don't know how many hundreds of foreign-trained teachers in the city, it's over.

We need things that are ongoing, and the employment insurance fund is.

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Clavet: You talked about the lack of understanding of the labour market and of cultural misunderstandings. What would a cultural misunderstanding look like in the case of a new immigrant in the workplace? How serious can it be?

[English]

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: I think also Ken Potvin referred to this in terms of the importance of communication in his profession. I think in many different workplaces, the way one communicates with other people is culturally determined and can be different.

If I can use myself as an example, OCISO has a large staff of 70, and it's a very diverse staff. People have different ways of greeting each other, and expectations about the little things can create incredible hostility, with people feeling that they've been snubbed by somebody, that they haven't been acknowledged, haven't been heard. The way authority is expressed in different workplaces in Canada compared to workplaces in other countries can be very different.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Roger Clavet: The bridging program for foreign-trained nurses at Algonquin College has had good results, did it not? We have 97 more nurses, and it is a big help. Are you considering an

extension of this program into other sectors, or with other associations or agencies?

Ms. Carmen Hust: You are right, and thank you for asking this question. This model could very well be used for other professions, besides nursing. It can be used in business. Let me switch to English, because it is so much easier for me.

[English]

Maybe an assistant's position or a bookkeeper to a chartered accountant.

[Translation]

As to the allegations that this project is over, they are unfounded. This program will still be provided at Algonquin College. It is completely

[English]

embedded in our regular programming. This program will continue after March 31 because we have revisited all of our curriculum in each program to include the internationally educated professional.

The Chair: Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I wanted to thank you all for coming and presenting. Yesterday, I was at the AGM of the universities, and I think they presented a very real problem about how to assess. Obviously, you want to assess a person's credentials, and that's their educational merit. You have to do it looking at the institutions, and I think what the OECD and UNESCO are doing is really key. In fact, I would like us as Canadians to take credit because at the Durban conference in 2001 we asked for a recommendation for international equivalency, credentialling and reciprocity. People are just naturally moving around the globe and this has become a problem. That was accepted, so that was written in. As a result, these whole steps have begun to take place. That's a good thing, and that will all take effect down the road. In the meantime, we have this particular problem.

What I have heard in my travels around the country doing my round tables, having a dialogue and listening to some of the solutions proposed, is that for many of the universities and colleges, credentialling bodies, regulatory bodies—and I'm only speaking of regulated professionals now—have said that it's difficult to assess. Here in Canada we assess based on a year by year process, someone observing the student, giving them a year-end assessment, etc. Many professions are not able...they don't know how; it's not that they're not able. They're trying to find a way to do an end-point assessment. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that many people are set up to fail when they are assessed or when they do their exams. If you're saying that language is one of the problems, and we have found that in fact specific language skills with regard to their profession are a problem, then the thing that people have said to us is that it's really difficult. You ask somebody to do an exam, which is testing their knowledge, in a language that's not their first language and they're going to fail it. One of the considerations we've been hearing is—and I would like your comment on this—shouldn't we be able to examine people in their first language? This is possible. We have enough people here in Canada who speak most of the languages of the world who are also professionals who can be trained, let us say, in medicine, to be examiners, or in nursing, to be examiners. You train people so you get the knowledge.

Of course, I would like to hear from you as well. Once you've got the knowledge and the credentials and the piece of paper, how do you move on to assessment of competence? Competence is a huge piece. It's one thing to know how to do something. It's another thing to be able to do it and to meet Canadian standards and expectations of Canadians, Canadian clients, Canadian patients, etc., not only for services but for goods. We've been working with many universities and colleges to get there. Have you found any answers to these taxing problems that we keep hearing over and over and over, (a) in assessment, (b) doing exams in languages of choice because you are set up to fail, and (c) competence? That is a huge problem.

• (1230)

Ms. Claire Morris: I'll just say a few words and then turn it over to you because you're much closer to the on-the-ground....

I think you've hit the nail on the head in terms of the complexity of making all of these pieces work together. That's the reason, unfortunately, that progress has been so slow. In fact, it does take that assessment of the knowledge gained in another country and then assessed in the Canadian scheme of things and the complementary learning or bridging that's needed to add to whatever that learning is. This goes along with the language skills, the Canadian work experience, and work culture. Unless all of the stakeholders that are involved in those pieces, and of course the regulatory body is absolutely critical to it, then typically people can't move ahead. That's why I think projects like the Algonquin project are so successful because it puts all of those pieces together.

The issue of testing in a native language I think is a question my colleague will answer.

Ms. Carmen Hust: To step back, I think the issue of our regulatory bodies or our education preparation is to provide safe practice, ultimately, for the practitioner and for you the consumer. The truth of the matter is that one has to practise either in English or in French here. That's not to say.... Many of our internationally educated nurses are hired by the public health department right here in the city to work with the Somali population or the others for the very unique skills they bring, so there is a wonderful place for them. But ultimately, as far as the health care team is concerned, the expectation is that the language is either English or French.

However, what we do at Algonquin is use simulated labs. We have very high-scale mannequins that speak, breathe, listen—all kinds of things—and we create scenarios, and we are moving now into

multidisciplinary situations where we can create more life-like experiences, where these nurses can play their role. It's very clear that if they can meet the same learning outcomes that I as a University of Montreal graduate have done, then they have met them.

Where our timelines are concerned, it's important that you realize that a component of those courses is the difference in what an immigrant would need in order to acculturate here so as to be successful on the board exam. There are issues around confidentiality; our concept of confidentiality here and that in another culture are very different. When they write the board exam they score poorly, and it's just because they didn't understand.

Those two months or eight months or eighteen months are really to acclimatize to that role: what is a BSc RN in our culture? They are not repeating anatomy, physiology, and all of the stuff that surely they have; they're only getting the part whereby they understand the role here.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madam Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): I thank you for your presentation. We enjoyed it a lot, as Diane said.

As you may be aware, more than 60% of immigrants to Canada have earned post-secondary education in their native countries, and nearly half are trained in regulated industries such as medicine and engineering. But according to a study conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, more than 540,000 immigrants are working at jobs beneath their education levels because Canadian institutions and corporations will not recognize their degrees from foreign universities. It found 23% of immigrants could not practise their profession, and 49% felt their foreign credentials affected their ability to get a job anywhere.

This is an obvious problem. Do you think institutional linkages between places here in Canada and others internationally assist in the recognition of foreign credentials? Is there anything currently being done along these lines?

• (1235)

Ms. Claire Morris: As I mentioned earlier, a number of our universities are involved in projects that not only recognize the credentials that have been received overseas but then provide the bridging program that will assist professionals to be recognized in Canada. That was the point I was making earlier about the important role the professional associations play. Ultimately they're the ones who grant admission to the profession.

There are two programs in particular I would mention: the University of Guelph actually has a bridging program that allows foreign-trained veterinarians to become trained in the Canadian system and be allowed to practise as veterinarians in Canada; and the University of Manitoba has a similar program for dentists, again providing a bridging program that will then allow them to move into dental practice.

So increasingly, and that's the purpose of the project we want to undertake.... I wish we were further along and could report to you on the results of it, as to which of these initiatives have been the most successful in bringing together the parties that have to be involved to open up the gates for the people who come with credentials from other universities overseas and simply need to add to them—to acquire some Canadian work experience, maybe acquire some language skills, but then be ready to move into practice. But the professional associations in the regulated professions are an absolutely key part of the whole process.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Diane, do you have a question? Go ahead.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: No. I think we've had some good information.

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

Mr. Smith.

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): We see there is work being done internationally, but my wife is a director of Info-Santé on the Quebec side and we find we have problems at home, between provinces, for example. We have maybe barriers between ourselves as a country, such as when we look at the construction business.

We could have long discussions on this subject, but is there anything that's being done on the local market and the local issues? For example, we spoke of the corporations, how they're so important and how their participation is so important...to maybe open or review their philosophies, the protectionism or whatever. Is there anything being done on the local issues between provinces to encourage provinces...? If we did it between ourselves, maybe it would be easier then to go to the next step and do it between different countries. I wonder if this could be answered.

Ms. Claire Morris: This is just as a point of information that may be of interest to you. As you know, in Canada education is a provincial responsibility.

The Council of Ministers of Education is the body that speaks to educational issues across the country, and they've in fact launched a process to try to articulate what they call a degree qualifications framework, which means that if you get a three-year bachelor's degree at any recognized institution across the country, we know you have this in the way of competencies. It's the same thing for a four-year bachelor's degree, an applied master's degree, another master's degree, or a Ph.D. If it works, it will define across the country what the expectations are; it's to give some uniformity.

That, together with the international project we were talking about, should over time—I can't promise that it will be next year—lead to some common sets of expectations that are legitimate. The international project they are embarked on is similar; they're trying to recognize institutions with some common standards.

But you're absolutely right; we still have work to do interprovincially, let alone internationally.

• (1240)

Mr. Ken Potvin: If I can, I'll just allude again to the mutual recognition agreement that exists for pharmacy. All provinces except Quebec have signed that mutual recognition agreement, and it allows pharmacists to move between jurisdictions, recognizing that they have a degree from an accredited university in Canada and that

they've met the language proficiency requirements. The additional requirement would be that they write a jurisprudence exam within that particular jurisdiction to show they're familiar with the provincial legislation there.

It's actually relatively easy for pharmacists to move between provinces because of the national coordination of that process.

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: I think it's also important to make a distinction between academic recognition in the academic world and then what employers look at. We see our clients going through the credential recognition process. They'll get a certificate from the U of T or from World Education Services saying they have the equivalent of something, but if employers don't understand or recognize that, it's not getting the people any further ahead. What happens between universities needs to get into the labour market.

Mr. David Smith: I agree, but take Maniwaki, for example, where I was brought up; it's an hour and a half north from here. We have a hospital and we have three doctors, but we need 14. We're talking maybe of closing the hospital, yet there are some guys driving taxis who could take care of the people back home. There are some things where there's no sense.

As a government we can only do so much. It comes back to the corporations and to the organizations that represent the medical institutions and the doctors and everything. This is why it's important that the work be done in the field and that the conversations be there between the different organizations and the different pressure groups.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question for Ms. Morris.

Ms. Morris, when the UNESCO process arrives at its determination of comparative institutions or some tool to help with that, how does that get implemented in Canada? How does it become an effective tool for use in Canada? Does it have to be adopted by individual universities or ministries of education? How does it have some force or value in implementation in Canada?

Ms. Karen McBride: The guidelines are non-binding in terms of the hierarchy of legal instruments—it's soft law—so they are being recommended to national governments. My understanding of the process is that the Canadian foreign affairs representative at the OECD and UNESCO would take those guidelines back to the foreign affairs officials, who in turn have close cooperation with the Council of Ministers of Education.

They would be disseminated in that way and through provincial ministries of education to institutions such as colleges and universities and others that may be involved. I think it's important to note that they're non-binding. They're advisory; they're recommendations. But each government will be asked to report to committees of the OECD and UNESCO on what they've undertaken in order to make those guidelines a reality.

Mr. Bill Siksay: So there's nothing that would impel a Canadian institution to use that set of guidelines ultimately.

Ms. Karen McBride: Nothing that would impel them. In fact, I think one of the principles that is quite specifically upheld in that document is the principle of institutional autonomy in terms of academic recognition.

I'd just underscore again, briefly, that if you haven't had an opportunity to hear about the work of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, that is also a key interlocutor in the international discussion.

Mr. Bill Siksay: In coming back to the OCISO folks, most of your recommendations deal with the situation of folks once they're here. I'm just wondering if you have any sense of what would be helpful to people before they immigrate to Canada, before they arrive in Canada.

We've often heard from people presenting in this process about delivery of better information. We hear of websites and web portals as being a way. I'm just wondering if you see that as an effective way of getting information or assistance to people about the actual situation in Canada, and if the clients you deal with would be folks who had access to the Internet when they were overseas, that kind of thing.

You've mentioned the difficulties people have faced with immigration consultants or people who've been helping them with their applications overseas. Could you comment further on that and whether something like face-to-face meetings with a Canadian official overseas is a more appropriate way of dealing with that.

But do you have any reflection on what might be helpful to the people you've been dealing with before they come to Canada, when they're starting the immigration process?

• (1245)

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: I can give you a personal opinion; we haven't discussed this as an organization. Personally, I think it would be helpful for people to have better information and to start certain processes before they come to Canada. But I also don't think it's all that realistic.

The mythologies about coming to the west are so strong that people don't believe.... We have doctors who've signed papers that say they understand they're not going to be able to practise in Canada, but they get here and they're still wanting to practise. I think it's very hard through a website, or whatever, to really convey some of this information. Some of those ideas would help for some people.

There's this huge industry overseas of helping people immigrate to Canada. People are being told to expect that the streets are paved with gold.

Ms. Luz Maria Alvarez Wilson: I believe there is some information on the website of the Canadian government advising applicants to check on the professional associations and so forth.

I think Canada would like to have qualified immigrants, and in that sense there is a potential here. We have to have vision. If the United States is able to take advantage of this professional, why is it that in Canada we cannot do it? We have to have some vision.

I find that new immigrants are voiceless in Canada at this particular point, because we are all busy trying to get our foot on the

table. It's very difficult for them to come to talk to you about these issues in an organized manner.

We have to have a vision of how we're going to take advantage of the qualified people we're lucky to have here and whom the industries probably need, because a doctor probably could work in a pharmaceutical company—not as a practising doctor, but in another capacity that could be very beneficial as well.

Right now I help international students come, and I always tell them to look at what they can take from Canada back to their country. The same situation applies here. How can we bridge and increase our participation around the world by having all of those immigrants here who obviously have contacts and a professional background in their home countries?

Ms. Nancy Worsfold: Personally, I would rebalance the program towards family. I think that would solve some of your other problems with respect to these huge delays in family reunification, and it might balance things out better.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank you all for coming and sharing your expertise with us. There really is hope, when we look at some of the programs that exist, and certainly, Kevin, at what your association is doing. If we had them all doing the same, we would be much better off.

We need a change in attitudes in Canada, because the reality is that immigration is the lifeblood of this country. I think you captured it very well, Nancy, when you were talking about the level of frustration that exists. I had some experience with it last week with a number of engineers who are not able to practise.

We have quite a mountain to climb. I look at institutions in this country. We have in my riding, Kitchener—Waterloo—which is going to be starting up a pharmacy program that will help with some of the shortage—problems getting recognition from the universities for credits that have been obtained at community colleges. I know the University of Waterloo ranks the students who apply according to which high school they came from, because they have predictors as to what the marks mean; there isn't the standardization of the marks that used to exist. That's a challenge, even at that level.

International students are very critical. I have a case in my area where a student in actuarial science from Pakistan—and actuarial science is one of the hardest programs to get into—was elected as vice-president of the federation of students, which means you take part-time university and work for the federation on campus full-time. He made the mistake of going back to Pakistan for Christmas holidays and now is having trouble getting back into the country. When we're dealing with student experience, it's so important to have the students from overseas involved in our universities, because it so enriches the whole university experience. We should have recognition that international students should also be able to work in student government. That's an important consideration.

I would like to thank you all very much for your testimony. Who knows? We might be asking you to come back again. Thank you.

We'll take a two-minute break. Then we'll reconvene.

•(1252) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1259)

The Chair: We're resuming the committee.

We have a motion in front of us that was duly circulated and notice given by Madam Faille.

Madam Faille, do you want to move your motion?

•(1300)

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Do you want me to read it again?

The Chair: No.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Meili Faille: Everybody has read it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate on that motion?

[*Translation*]

Hon. David Anderson: I have a question for Mrs. Faille. Did the ministerial decision on Vietnamese refugees solve most problems, or are there a few details that are still not settled?

Ms. Meili Faille: The minister told us he had something in mind, and departmental officials told us they would table a plan. At the last meeting, it was told this could happen in May. This motion is actually a procedure asking the department to abide by its commitment.

Hon. David Anderson: As a member of this committee and a colleague, you must be rather glad with the number of refugees the minister intends to accept.

Ms. Meili Faille: As a matter of fact, the figure given by the minister— Perhaps you have read what is in the news. There seems to be a difference between what the community understood and what the minister said. If we reaffirm this motion, the minister will get a chance to explain again and confirm what he has in mind.

Hon. David Anderson: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you asking to withdraw the motion?

Ms. Meili Faille: No, I'm moving the motion anyway.

The Chair: Dr. Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

I would like to maybe not speak against the motion but ask whether Madame Faille would withdraw it because, first and foremost, her motion specifically states that the refugees be given country-of-asylum class. One of the things that is very clear from all of the discussion is that they do not qualify for country-of-asylum class. But when the minister was here he said he would do the H and C for them.

The minister was very clear, but I understand the mixup was due to the mission in Manilla not having been given their full written orders yet, or not understanding them, so they sent a letter to Mr. Trinh saying they were going to follow the usual family class. The minister was very clear in this instance that he was going to expand the definition of family class to include siblings and adult children,

and the usual family class eligibility, such as parents, grandparents, dependent children, and spouses, would also be considered. But he also asked Manilla to do this on an expedited basis.

Now the United States, Norway, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines are working to deal with the 2,000 people who are there. First, everyone is going to look at taking them in under family class. Then Manilla will look at doing the same thing for those in the Philippines who have now become involved with families there, or have begun to build families there.

So it is felt that those 2,000 people will be taken care of. All of the countries have come together and have begun to discuss how they will dispose of or deal with the ones who are left without any other place to go. This is in hand, and the minister did expand the definition of family class in this instance to include siblings and adult children, outside of the usual. The people in the mission in the Philippines hadn't received that full piece of information. They now have. So I think Madam Faille's motion is kind of moot, if you don't mind my saying so.

•(1305)

The Chair: Madam Beaumier.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I think the motion should stand, the reason being that there is too much conflicting information, information that is sent to the minister's office and information you get when you call the Philippines directly. Charles Godfrey said he had written this letter based on orders from the minister's office, so what this does is just reaffirm the committee's intention and give the minister a little something to hang onto too when he's ordering it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I too am continuing to support this motion. I think it's very important that the committee make a strong statement on this. At the same time, I appreciate the commitment the minister made here, and I think we all received that information enthusiastically when he spoke at the committee—or before he came. He got a welcome here at the committee that was an indication of our appreciation of his move on it. Maybe it could be a little better than that, but that's neither here nor there. I appreciate that he's done that.

I do think the waters were muddied by the statement from Mr. Godfrey in the Philippines, and I don't think the official response from the minister's office, that the intention was to open a dialogue on this issue, was a particularly helpful response. It does indicate to me that the commitment may not have been as hard and fast as we had hoped at the time.

I'm not prepared to backtrack on this. I think Madam Faille's motion was a very helpful suggestion for how to address this situation, so I remain firmly in support of the motion.

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

The Chair: The next one we're going on to is Mrs. Ablonczy's motion.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have two motions here. The first one is designed to give us some idea of the dealings with these ministerial permits—or temporary residence permits, to be technical about it.

A number of members of Parliament have spoken to me, and not just from my own party, showing real concern about a lack of fairness and a lack of consistency in how these permits are allocated. Before we can make a reasonable complaint about this, we really need to know exactly what is going on here.

The motion would ask for only those permits concurred in by the minister personally and directly, and we have timeframes that cover two ministers' tenures. I've asked for information that covers reasons for the permits being issued, and I've tried to make it pretty thorough without being unreasonable.

I just really think we have to have this information. People are asking all the time about what's going on with these permits. I think a government has to be open and transparent about this. If they're being fairly and properly used, I don't have a problem, and I don't think any Canadian would; it's just that we have evidence that they're not.

So this motion is to get this information from the department; I hope my colleagues will support it.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

Hon. David Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have no concern about the principle of obtaining information on this from the minister, but there are a couple of mechanical procedural questions. One relates to when you refer to persons “intervening in this process, including public servants”. Would it mean, for example, that the people we had as witnesses today, who might have been phoned during the ongoing process, would have to be listed? In that case, I just wonder, if we have an open process of consultation out there, is this question capable of being answered either fully or in fact in a reasonable way to give us the confidence we need? That would be question one. In other words, how broad is it and how difficult is it to do?

And tied to that is, do you have any indication of what the cost of this would be? Is this a relatively straightforward costing issue, or are we looking at saddling the public with some very substantial costs for specifics in this resolution, which may add to the overall value but which may substantially increase cost and delay?

• (1310)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Chairman, in response to my colleague, I think my colleague is referring to the second motion I put forward, and I haven't spoken to that. I can do that, or whatever the chair feels is appropriate.

The Chair: Let's deal with one motion at a time.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Okay. I can then get back to my colleague on his questions on the second motion.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on this motion?

Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Just for information, it's not that the intent of the motion is not supportable; it's that some of the things the motion asks for are not possible to deliver on. For instance, it is not possible to

deliver on TRPs by postal code. TRPs are logged based on the country of origin and the province to which that person belongs. There is no ability to give you the postal code information.

Second, most of the information you asked for...for instance, on the one that “the Privy Council Office provide the Committee with a detailed, step-by-step explanation”, the Privy Council has absolutely nothing to do with the process at all.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: That's the second motion.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Sorry. We'll speak on your first motion then.

The postal code is the first one.

The data regarding H and C is not divided in the department issuance by either CIC issuance or ministerial issuance. It's just logged as H and C issuance in total.

The questions the member was asking with regard to inadmissibility, that information is easily available. It's possible to get that for the member because it is also in the annual report of the minister. It is ATIPable. The Library of Parliament has that data, and that data was given many times in the House of Commons.

Those are possible, but there are some that no matter how hard one tries, one is unable to get that information based on the manner in which the member asks for it. To say yes to a motion that would not be possible to follow through on is going to be kind of difficult.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: There are two things. One, I think I'd want the department to give us everything. I don't accept that the permits aren't available by postal code. They're mailed to somebody. Therefore there are addresses. Therefore there are postal codes.

Second, I don't accept that there's no way of telling which permits were issued at the direction of the minister. We are told as MPs, “You've had x number of permits; that's your limit”. Somebody knows how many permits the minister gave to members of Parliament, for example. It comes up in the House sometimes in response to questions, “Oh, so and so, you, the questioner, got a ministerial permit on such and such a date”. Obviously there's some record of these. So I simply don't accept that we don't know how many of these permits were given out at the behest of the minister. This information certainly seems to be available when it's in the government's interest to throw it in our face.

The Chair: Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: The response to that is whether a particular minister kept information in that manner. I don't know. When a minister leaves, whatever personal data that minister has is shredded. So we don't have the ability to get that particular minister's.... However, whatever a minister has in their political office is shredded.

We're saying that if you're asking for this, the department does not have it in postal code. By the way, these are not mailed to people. They're usually picked up at embassies and at visa offices. It's not true that they are there.

I think the honourable member has to realize that by me giving this information to the honourable member in terms of the way these are issued, and the member is saying she doesn't accept it...basically the member is telling me I am lying. I'm giving you the information I have.

You're asking for certain types of information. You have specifically detailed how you want it. Some of the information you are asking for is possible to give you. We cannot provide some of it in the exact manner and detail in which you asked for it because it is not possible to do so.

I just think it would be unfair and unreasonable to ask somebody to deliver on something when it is impossible to deliver, even with all of the good intentions of delivering on it. Most of the information that is possible to be delivered is also available through ATIP, in the annual report of Parliament, and in the Library of Parliament. But the department would be pleased to send it anyway to the honourable member, and has done so in the past.

•(1315)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Chairman, of course, I have the highest respect for my colleague, and she's aware of that. I'm assuming she is getting her information not from personal knowledge but from the department, and she doesn't run the department. I don't accept the department's information. Even if permits are picked up, there's an address on them. You don't give a permit to somebody without knowing where they live, and I simply don't accept that.

If the department is not keeping this information, then they need to tell this committee so directly, because they ought to be keeping this information. It's absolutely unacceptable that a department and a minister are using this kind of discretion without keeping proper records of it.

Hon. Hedy Fry: The records are kept—

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I can't believe that's happening, but if it is, I need to know that too.

Hon. Hedy Fry: I want to reiterate that the records are kept, but not under the member's postal code.

The Chair: Please make your remarks through the chair.

We have Mr. Siksay next.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

While I appreciate that there may in fact be problems with delivering this information, I think the request is a reasonable one. I think it's an important one, given the concerns that have been raised. I think the motion is thorough in the way it approaches the information that's required. If the department is unable to provide the information, I'm sure they will let us know in their response. So I strongly support making this request.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson.

Hon. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, to aid you in the decision you're going to have to make, I think Mr. Siksay has put his finger on it. Obviously this committee cannot ask the minister to provide something he or she cannot provide. I think probably well over 50% of the requests from members of Parliament made to me as a minister over more than a decade as a minister were impossible to provide and fulfill. So I would suggest that you just note that this resolution,

if it passes, would be subject to the possible, and if it's not possible to provide certain things, the minister may say so and explain.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Is there any more discussion?

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

The Chair: Now, do we report this to the House, or shall we send a letter?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I think I would like to make the House aware that a request had been made, and of course I think the letter would also be in order.

The Chair: How about the first motion, Madam Fry's motion? What's the wish of the committee on that? Shall we report to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Now, Madam Fry, I wonder if you would assume the chair, as....

I'm sorry. Diane, we have your second motion.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: The second motion is trying to get at how the target numbers for immigration are fixed for each of our missions abroad. A number of missions we visited said, "Once we've processed the target number of applications, we can't process any more." I've always been curious about how those numbers are arrived at.

I take my colleague Mr. Anderson's point, that the request to identify persons intervening in the process could cast the net too broadly. I would certainly be willing to narrow it to a more appropriate wording, if that would be helpful, such as "significant intervention", not just tangential advice. Nevertheless, I think we should know how those are fixed and whom the department uses as resource people in a significant way, because once we know how the process works we can assess whether the targets are being set appropriately.

That was the purpose of my motion. I hope I have dealt with Mr. Anderson's concern, but he'll let me know if I have not.

•(1320)

The Chair: Do you have any direction as to how we...? Do you want to just move the motion the way it is, or do you want to make the suggestion to...?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I'm open. We could add the word "significant" if the committee is willing to do that. It would be, under the second sentence of the first paragraph, "This explanation shall identify the persons who are significant interveners in this process..." Then that same amendment would be made in motion number two.

Perhaps Mr. Anderson can indicate whether he thinks that wording would satisfy his concerns.

Hon. David Anderson: Yes, I think that certainly puts some element of reasonableness in there. Thank you.

The Chair: Madam Fry.

Hon. Hedy Fry: That's a full motion, with the two paragraphs to it, Diane, is it? Okay. On the second one I have already noted, and I will repeat, that pertinent to this particular motion, the Privy Council cannot comply with this because the Privy Council has absolutely no role at all to play in the setting of the processes, the detailed step-by-step targets being set, or any such thing. So it is, once more, moot because that will not happen, but if Madam Ablonczy wants to get a letter from the Privy Council saying it doesn't, then that's okay, as long as one understands—and I want to put it on the record—that this is not a possible thing to do because the Privy Council has no role to play.

The Chair: Are there any further discussions?

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

The Chair: Madam Ablonczy, shall we report to the House in a letter?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Yes, please.

The Chair: Madame Faïlle, I wonder if you could take the chair, because I want to speak to the next motion.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faïlle): Madame Beaumier.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I'll read it into the record.

That the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration authorize the Chair to write on behalf of the Committee to the House Leaders, the Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, and the Speaker of the House of Commons to make the following request:

Whereas House of Commons committees that are authorized to travel by the House of Commons are conducting the official business of Parliament;

Whereas returning from authorized travel to vote in the House of Commons is costly, inconvenient, and disrespectful of witnesses, many of whom go to great lengths to make themselves available to appear before the committee;

Whereas Members of Parliament have a right to represent their constituents by voting in the House of Commons and should not be hindered by the fact that they are outside of Ottawa conducting official parliamentary business;

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration recommends that when there is a vote in the House of Commons and a House of Commons Committee is traveling on official business, the Standing Committee should be viewed, for the purpose of said vote, as an extension of the House of Commons and the clerk of the Committee should be authorized to register and report the vote to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faïlle): Mr. Telegdi seeks the floor.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Thank you very much.

This is not a status quo kind of motion. I've been around this place for a long time, and something one dreads in setting up a tour, such as the one we are embarking on, is we could be at the furthest spot from Ottawa and have to come back because there is a vote happening in the House. It seems to me that when standing committees of the House are travelling, we are on House business, and in this day and age of instant communications, I think it's a bit archaic to keep the old traditions as far as having to come back to Ottawa to vote is concerned. Never mind the cost and the inconvenience to us. I think it shows little regard to the people we invite to make presentations to the committee on issues.

So it's basically in that spirit that this is put forth. I'm hoping the committee can adopt this and the suggestion can go forward.

• (1325)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faïlle): Mr. Jaffer.

[English]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): If I understand the motion correctly, it's asking if, when we are on House business travelling with the committee, we could still be registering our votes with the House, even though physically we won't be there. I don't have a problem with that, and I don't know that any of my colleagues here would. But aren't there some restrictions against that in the House procedures? I'm just curious as to whether someone checked this out, because to my understanding that's not possible, even if we pass it here at committee.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Not under the present rules. What the House would have to do is adopt a different format, but I think it's a suggestion that's worth putting forward and have the House consider it or have the House leaders consider it. I think we should be starting discussion on this kind of reform.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faïlle): Ms. Fry.

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry: I want to support this motion, even though, as I think Rahim aptly pointed out, it may or may not be a possible thing to do because it will have to be considered by people other than us. In other words, we don't have that authority. But I do think it is a way of thinking outside the box. It's a way of resolving something in a country as large as ours that has become a major problem, and in a minority government it is an even greater problem because everyone is whipped to vote. But I do think that probably the most significant thing is that we have the technology to do it—to get that information back as soon as possible—and also the clerk of the committee is a duly sworn-in officer of the House.

So I think we have all of the trappings to do it. I do think, as Colleen pointed out, the most important thing is that many people prepare for a long time, some of them travel great distances to come to wherever we're holding committee meetings, and it is disrespectful of them—especially for the House to disrespect them when they come to meet us because we've had to pick up and go back simply to vote.

We talk here about money spent. It's a waste of money to fly back from, let us say, Victoria, to come and just vote—for one quarter of a second you stand up and say your name in the House. It doesn't make sense to me.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faïlle): Mr. Mark.

Mr. Inky Mark: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I applaud the mover of this motion. It's long overdue, and as Ms. Fry said, it's time to think outside the box. There are a lot of us who take an interest in not only government bills but in opposition and private members' bills. We would like to be here when votes are taken and we are denied that opportunity.

Whether it's a minority government or a majority government, with the technology today, we have to change the way we operate this place, and I think this is the first step in doing that.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Mr. Temelkovski.

[English]

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): I think it's thinking outside the box. It's progressive. There will be some challenges for us, even if the House adopts the motion and goes ahead and uses the authority to do so.

Because of time zones, we might be interrupted in our deliberation and have to take a vote in a corner of a room. The witnesses will be at our disposal, I believe, much more so than they are right now. So it's not only our vote that needs to be considered, but also the witnesses who will be there.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Mrs. Ablonczy.

• (1330)

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: This would set a precedent for other committees and other travel. It's a new concept. We haven't discussed it before. I'm trying to think how Canadians would view members of Parliament not being in Parliament and still having their vote registered, especially if the travel were international, for example.

I think we would want to think through that a little bit. Are there any other parliaments—maybe our researcher would know—where votes are counted in absentia, for example? Maybe our researcher could let us know how that works for other parliaments.

Mr. Benjamin Dolin (Committee Researcher): The only one that I'm personally aware of, and I haven't researched this in any great detail, is the Italian parliament, where they do have electronic voting and it's by proxy. So they'll often have—I forget what the term is in Italian. They call them basically piano players, somebody who will stand and vote for five or six different members of the parliament based on the instructions they've received.

That was something I remember our former chair, Mr. Fontana, was quite keen on bringing about in Ottawa a few years back and was discussing that as well.

I don't know of any other parliaments offhand. That doesn't mean there aren't any others. I assume there are.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: I was in the parliament and saw that explained. I believe that actually is not the way it's supposed to work. I don't think they're allowed to vote for someone else, but it does happen.

Anyway, that would be my one concern. I think we want to be very responsible in ensuring that Canadians don't get.... I think in this case, as my colleague Madam Fry said, it's entirely justifiable. But I would worry a little that bringing disrespect on the institution should become a precedent that expands too widely.

• (1335)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Ablonczy asked the question I was going to ask about other jurisdictions. I share a little of her concern. I think there is something important in gathering collectively in the House of Commons to go through the voting process. I think there's some expectation of Canadians that we come to this place to hear the arguments and be influenced by what other members of Parliament are doing, which is what's happening for me here this morning. I'm listening very carefully to the discussion here. I think it's an interesting suggestion, and I'm struggling with where I'm going to go with it.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: In terms of Diane's point on how the Canadian public might think about it, I think if it's defined as standing committee business or standing committees holding hearings, then Canadian people would say, hey, it makes a lot of sense. For the sake of coming back and standing for your five seconds, it would be a problem.

I expect that given the timeframe of doing anything around here, this thing won't necessarily come to fruition, even if it's supported by all. But I think it's important to give a little nudge to the status quo and see that it makes sense. We value the input of Canadians, so we do not inconvenience them and we ask them to come forward.

I would suggest we go ahead with it and see what kind of discussion it might initiate.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Madam Beaumier.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: I don't think any of us anticipate when we're travelling next week that this will be in place; however, I think it puts this issue on the table. It's something that Parliament should be considering. It's not necessarily even going to happen; however, we'll be on record as having requested that this is something Parliament should seriously look at.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: On a point of order, Madam Chair, I assume we'll be voting on this motion on Thursday because of the 48-hour notice rule. Rather than have this become a big issue—it may not, but it may become a big issue—I wonder if my colleagues have any advice as to how we should handle this. I don't want it to become a huge controversy before we've even had a chance to think about the pros and cons.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Diane just asked for a point of order at the same time as I was getting comments from three people. It gets confusing.

What Diane asked was the question of the point of order. This is what Bill was explaining to me. He received the motion 48 hours in advance but didn't get it circulated. At the present time, the rule is that it should be circulated to all members 48 hours in advance. If there's unanimous consent to deal with it and waive the 48-hour notice, we will deal with it today. If there isn't unanimous consent, then it will be under business on Thursday.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Let's deal with that right now. That's all. I have to run.

I wouldn't mind getting some notice on this. I don't have a problem with it in principle, but I'd rather deal with it on Thursday.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): We'll deal with it on Thursday. There's no unanimous consent.

The meeting is adjourned.

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