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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Andrew Telegdi**

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## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, April 14, 2005

•(1330)

[English]

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.)):** Good afternoon.

Thank you very much for coming to appear before us.

We'll start right away. You will have five minutes each for your speeches. Then we will have five minutes for questions and answers. We'll continue that until everybody has had a chance to speak.

Our session today is on international experiences and credentials. We will start today's panel with Lionel Laroche. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Lionel Laroche (President, MCB Solutions, As an Individual):** Does everybody have a copy of my presentation?

Very simply, I will talk from my own experience, which is that I am an immigrant from France. I probably fit the kind of profile that Canada is looking for. If I look at the point system, I think I would probably score 100.

I'm a graduate of the École Polytechnique in Paris. I speak French and English. I have a PhD in chemical engineering from the California Institute of Technology. I'm also a cross-cultural trainer, and I'm going to speak as well from the experience that I have training both corporations and people who are looking for jobs in Canada.

I specialize in helping new Canadian professionals who have a high level of formal education, in finding jobs that make use of their experience. I also teach organizations how to avoid rejecting qualified candidates for reasons that are not related to their ability to do the job.

The one point I want to mention or emphasize is that, to me, many people look at it as an issue of licensing or Canadian experience. The experience of most new Canadian professionals when they look for a job is that they go for a job that is either a government job or the government is the client.

For example, if you are a civil engineer, it's very difficult to get a job without the licence. You can't get a job as a medical doctor or a pharmacist without the licence. On the other hand, if you are a software engineer, you don't need a licence to do your job, but you need Canadian experience—at least that's what you hear when you go to interviews.

The reality, to me, is that the real issue is cultural or group differences. The point is, new Canadians are trying to achieve their

professional objectives thinking that Canada operates according to the same unwritten rules as their home country. When they come from countries that are very different from Canada, this approach does not produce the expected results, because of cultural differences. Very particularly, new Canadians conduct their job search in the same manner as they would in their home country.

The best example I can give you is my own. Why am I in Toronto? Well, I come from France, and in France, if you are somebody who wants to be a somebody, you go to Paris. So when I came to Canada, my first reaction was—no offence to anybody—that I had to go to Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver.

Well, my PhD is in chemical engineering—actually, it's in distillation. Who is the main employer of distillation engineers? The oil and gas industry. So where should I be? Alberta.

In my mind, going to Calgary was never an option. It didn't register—and I am not trying to offend anyone from Calgary. It's just the view of the world I had when I arrived in Canada.

So the point is that cultural differences are one of the major factors that create the mismatch we have right now between all these skilled immigrants looking for jobs and all these organizations looking for skilled people.

Very specifically, there are two cultural issues that are a real problem in my mind. One is specialists versus generalists. What I mean by that is most immigrants come from a culture where the best candidate for the job is somebody who has a very broad range of experience.

For example, in a country like India, if you are a corporation looking to hire, you are going to set the minimum educational requirement. This position requires a bachelor's degree, or this position requires a master's degree in a specific field—mechanical engineering, or whatever. Once you meet that requirement, the best candidate for the job is the one who has the broadest range of experience. As a result, we get a lot of candidates who will say, "I'm an IT specialist. I can do anything with computers." Or they'll say, "I'm an architect. I can design any kind of building."

Unfortunately, that's not what Canadian organizations want. They want specialists. They want somebody who has done the same job in another organization that's similar to theirs for the last five years. That's the ideal candidate. So that's one big issue.

Another big issue is the question of accomplishment. The word does not exist in many other languages, so that gives you an idea of how difficult the concept is to translate. The idea is that you'll end up with lots of résumés or candidates who go to interviews saying, "I did this, I did this, and I did this." Yes, but how well did they do it?

• (1335)

There is no quantification of their effectiveness, and as a result they do not get the job, because we want somebody who is good, not somebody who is average.

There are lots of other cultural differences—candidates who look at the ceiling during the whole interview and who are perceived as shifty; this is one out of 1,000 examples. Unfortunately, you have to get all of these little points right in order to be the best candidate. You don't need to be just good; you need to be the best.

When they get a position—and this is the next-to-last slide—new Canadians still need to contend with many other cultural issues. For example, what does being a good employee mean? What does being a good team player mean? How do I get my ideas across? What do I need in order to move up? We all know that new Canadians are underemployed or underpaid—well, underpaid in that they can't move up in line with their qualifications.

My contention is that understanding how Canadians think and how they compare the skills of applicants is the key to new Canadian employment. Success requires that they understand the Canadian professional culture very deeply. My recommendation would be to train new Canadians in the impact of cultural differences at the professional level and to screen immigrants based on cultural fit and cultural adaptability.

Thanks a lot.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

Now we will continue with Lucille.

**Ms. Lucille Joseph (President and CEO, Career Edge Organization):** Thank you very much, and thank you for this opportunity to meet with the committee.

My name is Lucille Joseph. I'm president of Career Edge, Canada's internship organization. This is Barbara Nowers, my colleague who runs our Career Bridge program for recent immigrants to Canada.

By way of background, Career Edge was begun in 1996 by a group of employers. To date, we've done almost 7,000 internships with almost 1,000 organizations across Canada. We're a not-for-profit organization. We run the Career Bridge program for recent immigrants to Canada. It's an innovative program created in partnership with our organization, community agencies, employers, and the Ontario government.

To date, nearly 200 professional-level immigrants have gained their first Canadian work experience as interns through Career Bridge in the greater Toronto area, and fully 85% have now gone on to permanent full-time positions in their field as a result of having done their internship. We help newcomers bring their full potential to Canada, leaving their survival jobs and actually getting into their

field, putting their own expertise to work in banks, high-tech organizations, municipalities, and other organizations.

The demand for Career Bridge internships by new immigrants vastly exceeds the supply of opportunities, so far, at Canadian employers, so we'd like to present a series of recommendations that are designed to expand the initial success and help a greater number of professional-level immigrants gain recognition for their international experience and credentials, gain access to more employment opportunities, and become contributing members of Canada's workforce. We're basing our recommendations on the first 18 months of the program—on ways to prequalify immigrants before they come to Canada, on ways to encourage more employers to recognize their credentials, and on using those principles to apply to recruiting and employment of professional-level immigrants in Canada.

Career Bridge started in 2003, with the Toronto City Summit Alliance, and grew to be an initiative of TRIEC, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, whom you'll hear from later today. We've also had help from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in funding of our start-up and are working with HRSD on the expansion of Career Bridge across Canada.

On the issue of immigrant credentials, one of our first lessons was that employers need professionals to have strong skills in language and high levels of education, yet few employers can accurately assess immigrant candidates for these attributes. As a result, many highly qualified international candidates are not even considered for employment, because of obstacles around language skills and assessment of their international credentials.

We recognize that some language testing is being done as part of the immigrant application process outside of Canada, yet we find that Canadian employers are unaware of this and don't find it to be consistent and reliable enough to rely on to make a recruiting decision. Canada lacks a standardized test for high-level workplace communication skills; therefore, at Career Bridge, we actually worked with immigrant serving agencies and education services to create a test for pre-screening the Career Bridge candidates.

Our first recommendation is that on language assessment the federal government develop a standardized method of assessing and measuring immigrants' workplace communication language skills as part of the immigration qualification process. The result would be a recognized qualification, presentable to employers when they arrive. This assessment would be based on the requirements and practices of Canadian employers. We recommend that these language assessments take place before they come to Canada. We find that recency is very important to employers, so the more they can do before they come, the faster they can get integrated into the workplace.

Secondly, regarding immigrant education, Canadian recruiters are often unfamiliar with academic institutions and qualifications outside of Canada, so accessing their education requires more resources than most employers are able or willing to put in. The onus is on the immigrant to get this equivalency done, and it's often time-consuming and can cause tremendous delays in their job search.

So our second recommendation is that the federal government ensure that professional-level immigrants have their education independently verified by a recognized, standardized institution such as World Education Services, whom you'll also be hearing from, or other members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services, and that this assessment be done before they immigrate to Canada and be something employers can rely upon.

• (1340)

We have learned the best way to encourage Canadian employers to recognize immigrant expertise is to assess the newcomer's ability on the job, and therefore things like internships and job shadowing are very important. The employers tell us these are helping to dispel the idea that candidates must have work experience.

One thing we find is that although public sector organizations are active in Career Bridge, neither the federal government nor the Ontario provincial government, nor any other provincial government, to date is participating in Career Bridge. We would encourage you to lead by example, where the federal government and its agencies not only support organizations like ours through your grant programs but incorporate immigrant recruiting processes and programs such as Career Bridge in your own human resources strategies.

Thank you.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Lucille, from Career Edge.

Now we're going to hear from the City of Toronto Working Group on Immigration and Refugee Issues, and presenting today is Sylvia.

• (1345)

**Ms. Sylvia Searles (Special Assistant to the Mayor of Toronto, City of Toronto Working Group on Immigration and Refugee Issues):** Thank you.

Bonjour. My name is Sylvia Searles. I'm special assistant to Mayor David Miller.

Counsellor Janet Davis, the chair of the City of Toronto Working Group on Immigration and Refugee Issues, was to appear before you today. She regrets she is unable to attend. Both she and the mayor are in city council meetings today. I will therefore be presenting on behalf of the mayor and members of city council. Attending with me is Rose Lee, who is the coordinator of diversity management from the city manager's office.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our insights with you on this issue of the recognition of international experience and credentials of immigrants. You have copies of our presentation, and a summary is also available in French.

There are a number of recommendations included in our written submission. However, in the few minutes we have to address you, we would like to highlight the following issues.

First of all, the federal government should take a leadership role and immediate and decisive action to ensure immigrants have the opportunity to contribute in the labour market to their full potential. Research shows it takes 12 years for the average immigrant to gain wage parity with those born in Canada. This is unacceptable and requires immediate attention.

Second, it is critical that the federal government collaborate with the City of Toronto as an order of government in finding solutions to this issue. Toronto receives half of all newcomers to Canada, and 100% of our net labour force growth is from immigration. The city is committed to supporting and collaborating with all orders of government and all key players in advancing the participation of immigrants in the labour market.

Third, immigrant settlement services and employment support services need to be coordinated and integrated. This integrated system must include a strong, non-profit, community-based employment service sector. In relation to this point, we recommend that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada place a moratorium on the implementation of the call for proposal process for the allocation of funding contracts. During this moratorium, the process should be evaluated under and be guided by the code of good practice on funding developed by the Government of Canada's voluntary sector initiative to address accountability and sectoral stability and capacity. The current call for proposal process is having a devastating impact on community-based employment agencies, many of whom pioneered employment readiness programs for internationally trained professionals.

Fourth, the federal government should support the development of an integrated and coordinated labour force development plan in Toronto. The plan should of course be fair and equitable and should respond to the needs of all immigrants, men and women, professionals and those with little or no professional training.

Fifth, the federal government should actively engage employers and provide tools and incentives to promote a supportive work environment that is free from discrimination and that values diversity.

Sixth, the City of Toronto has a strong stake in the successful implementation of Canada's action plan against racism, which includes a workplace strategy to eliminate racism and discrimination. We therefore recommend that the federal government establish strong partnerships with municipal governments and all key players in local communities, including employers and immigrant groups, in implementing and reporting on the progress of Canada's action plan against racism.

In conclusion, we would like to acknowledge the positive steps the federal government has taken in addressing this issue. Of critical importance is the commitment of funding to develop enhanced language training, as well as the development of credential assessment and recognition processes in both regulated and non-regulated occupations. However, more action is needed quickly, and we look to the federal government to take the leadership role.

I'm hoping that through the questions and the panel discussion we will have an opportunity to share with you some of the policies and the programs of the city, including our employment equity and fair wage policies, our mentoring and internship programs, which are geared specifically towards internationally trained professionals, and the mayor's round table on access, equity, and human rights, all of which are designed to facilitate the participation of immigrants in the city's workforce and the Toronto labour market.

Thank you. Merci.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you very much, Sylvia.

We will continue with Dr. Daniel Klass from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

• (1350)

**Mr. Daniel Klass (Associate Registrar, Director of the Quality Management Division, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I am Daniel Klass, the associate registrar and director of the quality management division at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which we shorten to CPSO.

I appreciate this chance to talk to you and your committee about our current activities in approving the licensing of international medical graduates, and I'd also like to provide some suggestions about how we might do even better in the future.

The college has the statutory responsibility for regulating the medical profession in the public interest, and an important part of this is setting entry-to-practice standards for all medical doctors in the province.

In the past 10 years we have recognized the growing shortage of doctors in Ontario and the waste of human talent that restrictive entry-to-practice policies can create. The CPSO has acted to ensure that in all of our entry processes, the verb "regulate" should be read as "facilitate", with the important caveat that in reaching for this goal, the college cannot compromise its fundamental obligation to ensure medical standards for the people of Ontario. In addition, we are obliged to meet a high bar of fairness for all candidates for licensure, whether they are students trained in the Canadian system or trainees from abroad.

We are in full agreement with your desire "to see a process in place whereby immigrants will be able to obtain...Canadian equivalency for their professional... credentials" to best facilitate their ability to work as doctors in Ontario. We are moving, wherever possible, to find and recognize equivalency and training and educational experience in non-Canadian systems, but we're also moving beyond that target. We're replacing the dependence on credentials as the determinant of registration with an innovative process that also recognizes evidence of competence in entry-to-practice decisions.

Canada has a progressive system of medical education that has been fully integrated with registration for practice for nearly a hundred years. Criteria for Canadian-trained doctors to enter practice are clear and well defined. The benchmarks for equivalency and for competence are naturally derived from this system. This process is

the envy of most other nations and serves to assure Canadians a high standard of medical care across the country.

While we can take pride in this system, we also acknowledge that the supply of physicians trained in this country has fallen short of the need. We are a land of immigrants, and around one-quarter of Canada's practising doctors are ordinarily trained outside of the country. Nonetheless, we have inadequately acknowledged this dependence and have never properly smoothed the integration of foreign-trained doctors into Canadian practice. A big part of the challenge both for us and for the immigrating doctors is the complexity of our systems.

Let me briefly summarize the actions the CPSO has taken alone and with partners to improve the registration and training pathways for IMGs.

We've been involved in setting up and maintaining the Ontario IMG program, which has served as an access program for hundreds of physicians.

We have helped the development of the assessment program for IMGs, which helps foreign-trained specialists enter practice.

We have spearheaded the work of a physician human resource task force, the document or outcome of which is in this package; it summarizes our recommendations arising from that effort.

We've developed regulatory policies to facilitate the recognition of equivalent credentials, training, and practice experience of IMGs, as well as policies to give supervisory support to candidates accepted for practice with credentials or training that appear to be equivalent.

We have taken a leadership role in Health Canada's effort to develop a national approach to improving access of IMGs to practice throughout Canada.

As a result of all these efforts, innovative access programs are being rolled out and an attempt to develop a coordinated national system is under way. Evidence of our success is the increase in numbers of foreign-trained graduates who are being registered in Ontario. Last year, for the first time, more licences were granted to IMGs than to Ontario grads, and in just the last six years the college has granted licences to IMGs educated in over 105 different countries. Much of the improvement we are seeing is attributable to the regulatory authorities in Canada, and I think the CPSO has played a leading role.

What challenges do we still face? Our own survey suggests that the shortage of doctors will be deeper than earlier projections. As a result, we at the CPSO have a number of recommendations to help reverse the physician shortage in Ontario.

•(1355)

We believe the programs being developed in Ontario are the right ones, but we need to expand them in the future. In particular, we continue to advocate for the necessary financial support from government to ensure that there are adequate assessment and training opportunities for all international medical graduates.

Second, we must recognize the importance of health human resources as an urgent element of health care sustainability. We need to study and plan these resources more carefully than we have in the past, and we must continue to ensure that all the human resources we are blessed with in this country are valued, regardless of country of origin. Our approach to reclaiming this value resides with ensuring that where credentials are available we work to determine their equivalence to Canadian benchmarks, and where they are not, we utilize fair and valid assessments that are equivalent to benchmarks in the Canadian system to facilitate fair entry to practice.

Thank you for the chance to provide these comments. I invite committee members to visit the college to learn more about our programs and recommendations, and I'd be happy to answer any of your questions now or later. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Doctor, you're good. You're right on five minutes.

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** Thank you. That's the first time in my life.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Now we're going to hear from Andi Shi from the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada.

**Mr. Andi Shi (Vice-President, External Affairs, Chinese Professionals Association of Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name's Andi Shi. I'm the vice-president of the Chinese Professionals Association of Canada. We are a non-profit organization with 30,000 members.

The issue of credential recognition for internationally trained professionals, or ITPs, is a difficult one, and there are no easy answers. But we do have a few ideas we'd like to recommend. Number one, credential recognition, we believe, should happen outside of Canada before the immigration visa is issued, because that's where information is readily available about educational institutions, and also professional standards are easy to assess.

Number two, we recommend establishing occupation-specific assessment bodies. Many professions in Canada are not regulated and therefore new bodies need to be set up. All we need to do for the regulated professions is to expand the function of the regulatory body to include the functions of assessing, diagnosis, prescribing, and providing remedies. By remedies I mean skills upgrade programs for people who cannot meet the standards to go through and meet the standards.

Number three, we recommend more funding for higher-level language training. We did a study a few years ago and the number one barrier to professional employment, we discovered, was lack of language skills. The language training these people need is not the LINC-type of basic training, but workplace language and culture training at a professional level. We have developed several such programs, which are very popular, but we can only accommodate 12

people at one time. We would be very happy to do a lot more if we had some government funding, and we recommend that funding in this regard be increased.

Number four is providing internships for Canadian experience. The second barrier to professional jobs is a lack of Canadian experience. That's what we identified in our research. The best way to deal with that, we think, is to have a government-funded internship, that the government provide a tax credit or financial incentive to motivate employers to take in foreign-trained professionals as interns for a minimum of one year.

Five is to heighten the awareness. Canadian experience is really not needed in many workplaces, and immigrants bring a lot of value to the Canadian workplace, but the general awareness is very low. So we recommend the government have a long-term communication strategy, and within the strategy, two key components are important. One is to have training modules on the value of diversity and also a national study on the competence and the performance of foreign-trained professionals versus Canadian peers.

Number six, we recommend a nationally integrated approach instead of the current piecemeal approach across Canada. We think immigration is a national policy and therefore we do need a nationally integrated system where all the governments, regulatory bodies, employers, service agencies, and immigrants are involved to deal with issues of credential recognition.

Number seven, we recommend a national conference and a national newsletter. This is an easy thing to do and it's a very sensible thing to do for people across Canada to share their experience and best practices.

Number eight, and my final recommendation, is prompt service. The most startling discovery in our research is if a newcomer cannot find employment within the first year in his or her trained profession, the chance of ever getting back to that profession is extremely low; it's only 6%. In other words, if you can't get employed in your field in the first year, you are almost totally lost forever. So we urge the government to make sure that every newcomer is informed of all the help available and that newcomers are helped as soon as possible.

Thank you.

•(1400)

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you very much.

Now we will continue with Ms. Hua.

**Ms. Colleen Hua (National Executive, National Office, Chinese Canadian National Council):** My name is Colleen Hua. I represent the Chinese Canadian National Council, the CCNC. We are a national non-profit organization with about 27 chapters across Canada. Our mandate is to promote the equality rights and full participation of Chinese Canadians in all aspects of Canadian society.

We believe Canada's immigration and refugee policies must reflect the humanitarian values that are commonly shared by Canadians and that such policies should enhance the ability of immigrants and refugees to make an important contribution to the future of this country.

I want to thank this committee for listening to all of us today and for giving us the opportunity to share our recommendations and views.

There were questions sent around prior to the standing committee hearings. One of them was with regard to this section, what process there could be or what process we think should exist for the recognition of international experience and credentials. The one thing I have heard today—and many of my colleagues have already mentioned this, and I won't repeat their words—is that they are multifaceted. There is not one way and one process that's going to work for all the different professions or trades that come with the people who come into this country.

Basically, our recommendations are very similar to those that were already spoken today: that more funds or resources be allocated to some process for information to be shared before people come to Canada—I think that's what we heard from a lot of people today—and that there need to be more resources given to the trades and professional sectors themselves to be able to give information to newcomers before they make the application, or in preparation for them before they come to Canada, so that they are aware what the trends are, in what provinces maybe their trade is going to be more useful, and also what requirements they need to meet in terms of licensing or accreditation before they come to Canada.

I also think resources need to be given to the actual professional bodies and regulatory bodies, for them to do exactly what the CPSO has been doing around their particular professions. It takes a lot of resources to do all that research and development, and there are different sectors.... Especially the trades, I think, are one sector where we find we don't have a lot of workers here in Canada. That would be another area for resource allocation.

Other people mentioned occupation-specific language training skills or language training in English. We're recommending that more occupation-specific language be available for people. Being able to pass the TOEFL or the IELTS exam does not exactly reflect a person's capacity to operate within a profession or in a job, and the language skills aren't assessed properly. So it would be helpful for people to get support—again, outside of Canada before they come—around their occupation-specific area, in the English language.

One thing I want to add that people haven't mentioned necessarily here is that more resources need to be given to settlement and integration programs and services. Currently, in Ontario we are only receiving for immigrants about \$800 per person. There was a

recommendation, when I was here a couple of years ago, in which we asked for that to be increased to \$3,000. That was actually a recommendation made by that standing committee in 2003, that across the board each newcomer would be serviced and have \$3,000 allocated to support them. I would support this recommendation being implemented as well.

Just to end on a quick example of a program that does work, there's a program called Care for Nurses here in Canada that's funded by the CIC. It has helped increase the employability of internationally trained nurses from 30% to 70%. This is a program that started out as a pilot project and has now grown, supporting many nurses coming into Canada in successfully getting their training, passing their exams, and finding jobs. Everybody comes out of it a winner, and I think more programs like that should exist and be funded.

Thank you.

● (1405)

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you very much.

We will now start with our questions and comments and answers. Hopefully we will get more answers than questions and comments. We will start with Madam Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to each one of you for being here and for your presentations.

There is a critical shortage of health professionals in Canada, doctors and nurses especially. Is it just greener pastures alone that lure doctors and nurses to the U.S., or is our system failing them?

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** I can't speak for health workers in general. I know the facts about medical doctors, but I am not really expert outside of my profession.

The United States is the beacon, and people are always attracted first to the United States. I think it's hard to understand why that's the case, but it is. The American system for recognizing physicians with foreign training is a fairly liberal one. They long ago combined all of the assessment programs required for licensure into a set of programs that are available around the world. So there is accessibility of their programs. Also they have a very open system of training. For those physicians who qualify, based on their credentials and assessments, there is a very large reservoir of training physicians for them to complete their educational requirements in the United States.

So it is both an attractive place and a fairly welcoming place in terms of the medical situation. From that perspective, my personal belief as a Canadian who has practised in many places around the world, including the United States, is that Canada is every bit as much as attractive a place as the United States for practice. But our system, as I alluded to in my talk, has not been as facilitatory to international medical graduates to gain particularly that training piece and licensure.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Lionel.



**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** If I can add a comment, more about the attraction of the U.S. compared to Canada, the U.S. was very attractive to immigrants up to 2001. September 11 has changed the situation drastically. I can't comment on the health care profession specifically, but I can say that since, let's say, 2002, a lot of immigrants are now looking at Canada as number one rather than the U.S., because it is so difficult now to get into the U.S.

I can tell you my wife is a professor at York University. Before 2002, when a student from China would apply to her research group and a research group in the U.S., usually that student would end up in the U.S. Now that student ends up in her group. So there has been a real shift in the U.S. in looking at immigrants as a threat as opposed to an opportunity.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Any other comments?

**Ms. Colleen Hua:** I have one comment to make as well. For the Chinese Canadian community too, we are seeing with newcomers coming from China that people are heading back to China after they have tried to find jobs here. So I think the brain drain is not only happening from people from Canada, but it is also happening from our newcomers who are coming here with that expectation of finding jobs and then not finding that a possibility because of processes like this, but also because there aren't any jobs in that area, so they are going back home.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

We will continue with Monsieur Clavet.

• (1410)

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You can see how hard it would be if, in addition to French and English, there had to be translation into Mandarin. That would be a bit difficult.

It's a pleasure for me to meet the representatives of the Chinese Canadian National Council. I will be taking part in the debate on Monday in the House of Commons on Bill C 333, which seeks redress for a certain form of injustice done to the Chinese community.

It says in your brief that the units of assessment allotted to knowledge of the official languages should be decreased. That could be problematic. We have heard a lot of people talk about the units of assessment system and its validity. You can't always put a number on that.

I'd like you to say more about the need to increase training, to put more money and resources into training programs.

Is that something you could consider, Ms. Hua?

[English]

**Ms. Colleen Hua:** I think I understood most of that. I was really trying to understand most of what you were saying.

The reason why we are asking for the number of points to be reduced for the IELTS is because it does not necessarily reflect people's capacity to work in their given professions. What I was hearing today too was that maybe more points or more emphasis

should be given to the other capacities or skills that people have to bring into the country, and if the language tests are maybe made more specific to occupation or if there is a different standardized test that looks at professionals, that should also be included.

But at this point the number of units that are currently awarded to people seem quite high given the fact that the test does not actually measure people's ability to use that language in a workplace.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you.

My question, this time, is for Mr. Laroche. I find it interesting, given his personal experience, that he says you don't necessarily have to flock to Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal. He said that Alberta wasn't an option back then. Other people must feel the same way.

**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** Yes.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** You have experience with immigrants. You are a consultant and you work with people. Isn't too much of the burden of proof being put on the immigrant? You seemed to be saying, when you were talking about cultural differences, that immigrants very often misconceive their role. I get the impression that more of the blame is being put on the immigrant than on the host society, which doesn't have a very good understanding of the immigrant's culture either.

**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** Actually, you are asking two questions.

First, am I a representative case? Canada is currently receiving a substantial number of engineers from Iran and Iraq, who are experts in the petrochemical industry. They arrive in Toronto and don't go to Calgary, Edmonton or Fort McMurray, and yet those are essentially the places where they should be looking for work.

Second, with respect to people adapting to Canadian culture, you are asking in a way who is responsible for that adaptation. In my experience — and this is also what I recommend — immigrants have to do 80 per cent of the work and Canadians have to do the rest. Personally, I had to do a lot of adapting in order to find work and advance professionally in Canadian society.

If I were to go back to France now and try to work there, I would have the same problems adapting as I had when I came to Canada, because I am basically no longer able to work there. My thought processes are no longer suitable. However, I know that my colleagues and my Canadian family have adapted to me in part. That's why I say 80 per cent versus 20 per cent.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you.

In conclusion, I have a quick question, this time for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. I heard Mr. Klass say that the standards cannot be compromised. Fine. But people have been saying since we started these hearings that it's not so much the standards that count as access. That may be the priority. Each time we hear from a college of physicians or a professional order, they put the emphasis on the standards.

I understand that all politicians are not crooks, that all doctors are not businessmen, but all citizens who don't have access to a doctor are victims.

•(1415)

[English]

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** Well, that's our dilemma. I think we have to take into account the fact that to many people the issue is made a nonsense if there is nobody there to look after them at all.

We have to struggle with that phenomenon because our duty is a bifurcated one in that situation, because we then have an obligation to ensure a standard, but we also have the obligation to do our best to ensure that the standard is there to be met. All I can say is that any help you can give us with that one, go ahead and do it. It is a real push and pull situation.

The other access we prefer to talk about is access to the standard for the professionals, and that's where we have been able to do a lot of work I think. It's easy to say, look, doctors have to come up to a certain standard and if you don't make it, that's too bad. What we have tried to do is to facilitate physicians from international sources to be able to achieve our standard and to be as flexible as we can to make that possible. And I guess that is how we have tried to forget about that other uncomfortable phenomenon.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

We will continue with Mr. Siksay now.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your presentations. They've all been very helpful.

I wanted to ask Ms. Searles and Ms. Lee about recommendation 3, the one around the call for proposal process and the experience of HRSD in Toronto.

Where I am from, British Columbia, the provincial government, which has an agreement with the federal government for settlement services and which provides the settlement services in British Columbia, went to a request for proposal process last year. It's caused incredible dislocation in the immigration settlement sector in B.C. In a sector that was very cooperative, now it's very competitive, and lots of relationships have broken down. There are also areas that aren't covered any more, either because groups chose not to go through the process, since it was too onerous for them, or because they just refused to participate. We have some communities that have no settlement services now as a result of the process, at least initially.

So our experience has been very negative in that regard, yet Citizenship and Immigration Canada is looking at doing that in the settlement service area in Ontario now; that's my understanding. I asked the minister about that when he appeared before us last time. He said he did not comment on rumours, but I understand now there were actually consultations going on at the same time I was getting that answer from him—or very soon after, or perhaps even before.

I'm just wondering if you could expand a little bit on what the problems of that have been and what you see as the benefits of the good funding practice code from the voluntary sector initiative.

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** Rose is going to respond, but I would say ditto to everything you said about what we're experiencing now.

**Mrs. Rose Lee (Coordinator, Diversity Management, City of Toronto Working Group on Immigration and Refugee Issues):** I think in the Toronto region the community-based settlement service sector is beginning to have the same experience as in British Columbia. We know some of the very experienced community-based employment services that were pioneers in starting mentoring programs and sector-specific terminology and information counselling programs are being threatened by this program, by this call for proposals process.

What we hear from the community-based agencies is that usually very short notice is given to the agencies to bid for the contract. It could be as short as four to six weeks, and you're expected to complete a very demanding, elaborate set of forms. Also, it is not just the non-profit sector that is bidding; the private business sector is also bidding for the contract. As far as we know, some of the very experienced community-based employment services are losing the bids to some bigger institutions, to some bigger businesses.

In the city of Toronto these community-based sector services do not just provide services; they are an instrument for engaging people in the neighbourhoods and engaging newcomers in the communities. Really, they are a part of civic participation, and they help tremendously in integrating newcomers and getting them to participate in all aspects of society. So we are very concerned; we see the stability of this sector being disrupted now.

The federal government itself, the volunteer sector initiative, has developed in consultation with the community sector a set of guidelines for good funding practices. Our recommendation is that the federal government should go back to those sets of guidelines, and we are recommending that a moratorium be put on this call for proposal process now.

•(1420)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you.

In my own community of Burnaby, the Burnaby Multicultural Society was the main agency that delivered settlement services, and then they lost the contract and now have no funding. Another very capable organization that has served Vancouver and parts of the greater Vancouver area got the contract, but they have no contact in Burnaby yet, so they're starting from scratch, building from there.

I also wanted to ask you about the action plan against racism and the other initiatives the City of Toronto is taking to deal with issues of racism. You are one of the few groups that has actually used the word "racism" in the context of this discussion on international credentials. I appreciate that you've done that, because it's always seemed to me that this is an underlying issue, and sometimes a very present issue, but it's often one that is difficult for us to talk about.

I wonder if you could just talk about some of the city's initiatives in that area.

**Mrs. Rose Lee:** Toronto City Council was actually an advocate that the Government of Canada develop a domestic action plan against racism. That was in the year the United Nations called the World Conference against Racism. The City of Toronto is very pleased that now the Government of Canada has its own action plan against racism.

Where do we see the connection between racial discrimination and the employment participation of newcomers? We are talking about a whole range of discrimination here. It could be direct; it could be systemic. For systemic discrimination you don't have to prove intent. Sometimes our system, our policies, can create unintentional barriers. Who are the people at the receiving end of these kinds of practices? Racial minorities, because three-quarters of the newcomers arriving in Canada are members of racial minorities. That's where we see the connection between the issue of race and the issue of newcomers' access to the labour market and to other aspects of society.

The City of Toronto has been implementing its own plan of action against racism and discrimination. We are looking at a coordinated, integrated approach. Actually, we are asking all city departments to develop their own departmental or divisional action plan. We are looking at the full range of ramifications in the issue, and employment—economic participation—definitely is very important.

We are also looking at how to build community capacity so the communities themselves can mobilize their own resources—and these are communities who have resources—to deal with the different kinds of barriers in communities and in the society at large.

The City of Toronto has a grants program that specifically supports activities to combat racism and discrimination, and these are some of the examples. In terms of employment practices, the City of Toronto has an employment equity policy, and we know the four designated groups in employment equity: racial minorities, women, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities. Also, the City of Toronto in its job postings doesn't ask for Canadian experience. To us that's a barrier; that's the kind of systemic discrimination put on newcomers. It's not intentional.

I think we see the legitimate need of the employers to make sure newcomers can adapt to the Canadian workplace, but there are other ways of addressing this issue. To the City of Toronto we look for equivalency...and in partnership with Career Edge-Career Bridge we are offering internships. We are also working with a consortium of community agencies to provide mentoring programs to internationally trained professionals.

These are some examples of what the City of Toronto is working on to remove barriers.

• (1425)

**Ms. Barbara Nowers (Director, Career Bridge Internship Program, Career Edge Organization):** Mr. Chair, could I just add to that point from the standpoint of addressing the issue of racism, as to whether it's racism or systemic discrimination?

Our experience in Career Bridge has been that employers are busy people and recruiters are busy people, and when they're looking to fill a position, they have tried and true methods for filling positions. To offer them a brand-new pool of candidates and talent they may

not otherwise have looked at before requires us to ask the employers, what are the barriers? What is it that we can do for you to break down those barriers?

With Career Bridge as an internship program, you want to reduce risk. You reduce risk by creating a probationary period that allows the employers to test these candidates out. They find they're pleasantly surprised; it's like trying out something new. Then as you increase the intake, you lower the risk and you lower the likelihood the employer is not going to turn to this pool. That's one way.

The second is to test language skills in advance to ensure the candidates put forward have the language abilities to adequately perform in the workplace.

The third is to make sure their educational credentials have been assessed to be equivalent to Canadian ones.

If you can take all of those resistors off the table and get to the recruiters to allow them to accept this new group, it can actually end up working very well...as a test market for this group.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you for your input.

Mr. Laroche.

**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** I would like to add one thing about discrimination and racism. I think this goes along with what Rose was saying earlier. That is that the biggest failure, as I see it, is what I would call involuntary discrimination.

I will give you a very concrete example. If you have a candidate who comes for an interview and looks at the ceiling during the whole interview, how will the average Canadian recruiter evaluate that behaviour? Well, typically—and I do workshops with corporations and can tell you what answers I get all the time—it is, this person is not trustworthy; this person is hiding something; this person is not engaged; this person is not interested, and so on.

All interpretations are negative, and most will result in the candidate not getting the job. And what is the real driver for that behaviour? This candidate is from a cultural background where making eye contact is a form of disrespect.

From the candidate's perspective.... Let's say the candidate calls back two weeks later, but didn't get the job and asks, "Why didn't I get the job?" Will he or she hear, "You didn't make eye contact, so we thought you were not trustworthy; that is why you are not getting the job"? There's not a chance, is there? This candidates will hear, "You lack Canadian experience", or, "You don't have a licence", if it's a licensed profession.

There are two problems here. One is Canadians' politeness, if I can say it that way, which kind of goes around the issue. From the candidate's perspective, this is discrimination: they are not getting the job, but they have not been tested on their ability to do the job. From the perspective of the recruiter, there is no discrimination involved. They are doing a fair assessment based on the behaviour. To me, this is where the education comes in, training both the candidates and the recruiters so that they understand what the culturally driven behaviours are during interviews, so that we can remove these kinds of barrier.

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** I would like to comment on a couple of things that have been said. It was interesting, because—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Briefly, if you can, please. We have gone way overboard—

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** I will try. I really need to make these two points.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Yes, I see the validity, and we will continue.

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** I think it is one thing to talk about what the impression is when someone looks that way and how they might be discriminated against. It is another thing for us to get to the point where we figure out what is happening in us that causes us to make those kinds of decisions.

I think we can talk about removing barriers. But, for example, what about those racial minority immigrants whose first language is English? It is not a language barrier; it is not all of those other things. If we don't recognize the impact that racism is having in the employment field right now, and we look at all of these other barriers and ignore that, we are going to find the same problems we have had before, except in a much larger population that is now a majority as opposed to a minority.

• (1430)

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Colleen.

**Ms. Colleen Hua:** Just quickly adding on to that, even the assumption that people are pleasantly surprised when it works out I think already speaks to where people are coming from as employers—being pleasantly surprised that actually a newcomer or an immigrant is able to do the job right off the bat.

The other piece around the systemic perspective on racism—I think we spoke to this a bit yesterday—is that there are not enough and there is an inequitable allocation of resources even to the immigration offices in different countries around the world. We see that already for our community in Beijing, where there are hardly any officers. There is a large number of applications that go through; there are huge waiting lists. We need to recognize the trends in immigration. We also need to recognize where we can find people who can meet our employment needs here.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

Now we will turn to Madame Beaumier.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West, Lib.):** Thank you.

Actually, Lionel, you answered a number of questions I had asked someone previously, in the morning, about cultural differences.

There were things that, once you had mentioned them, I certainly recognized.

Colleen, I want to talk to you. Both you and Lucille spoke of having people's credentials verified and qualified prior to their coming to Canada. Would this in fact eliminate some people who were coming using their credentials to get the points, knowing that if they were informed they would not likely be able to get jobs in their field but would have to go through more training, it would then take away from them the choice of being able to come and do whatever it was they had to do instead of acting in their profession? Do you not see that as a potential trap for some people who really want to come to the west no matter what?

**Ms. Lucille Joseph:** From the perspective of the Career Bridge initiative, I think the advantage would be that you would be able to make an informed decision. Our experience with candidates for Career Bridge is that they come to Canada with very high expectations, and often unrealistic expectations, and they are going to find out sooner or later that they don't have the tools they need to continue in their profession. If it were me, I would rather know that before I came than after I had made the move.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** However, you are not coming from a third world country where living conditions may be less than desirable for raising your children.

**Ms. Lucille Joseph:** Absolutely, but I would still.... I don't know whether you would want to tie the testing we are thinking of with respect to Career Bridge to the points system. We're not experts on that. All we are saying is we would like to have people who come to Canada have a realistic understanding of their situation relative to their Canadian workplace.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** Okay, so what you are really speaking of is being more informed.

**Ms. Lucille Joseph:** Yes.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** Okay.

Yes?

**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** I like to speak on these topics; I feel so passionate about them. I am sure you have noticed.

One of the things I do in training sessions with immigrants is draw them a chart of success as a function of time. If you look at it, in their home country they are moving at one rate. The minute they arrive in Canada it is like a freefall, and then some turn around and go back home. Some turn around and get into a survival job such as driving a cab or operating a dry-cleaning business—just as an operator—and some do make it up. But as we have heard earlier, it takes 10 to 15 years to get back to the point where you would have been if you had stayed in your home country.

When I draw this graph for immigrants, a lot of people say, "I wish somebody had told me this. I wouldn't be here if I had known this." I think that is what we are talking about, definitely.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** It is just giving them the choice, not excluding their points based on the fact that the degree they are using has given them the points. We are not going to take them away if it—

•(1435)

**Mr. Lionel Laroche:** Let me add about my own experience. Actually, I went to the States before coming to Canada. My idea of California when I left France was sea, sex, and sun. You will excuse the expression, but that is exactly what it was. I was 21, so you can imagine.

The point is, what I found there was graduate school and 24-hour work, and nothing else. When I talked to people in France about California I would get people with very positive views and I would lap it up, and when I talked to people who talked about smog and stuff like that, I didn't want to hear about it.

You need to give the information. It doesn't mean it will change the decision, but at least people have it.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** The other issue I really want to discuss is hiring practices and racism.

I am delighted to hear that the City of Toronto has a program for settlement. I would hope perhaps you can get some interest out my way, in Brampton. As a Canadian who was born here, I am terribly ashamed when I go into my city hall. I haven't been in for a couple of years, but I will stand in the bank and I may be the only white person in line. I look around, and the demographics of the people who are working there reflect the business reality of the community.

Two years ago, when I last went into city hall, I was hard pressed to find anyone of colour. The federal government says it has hiring practices, but we find that at entry level we have lots of immigrants and lots of visible minorities—on the entry level. I believe we probably have the best-educated sweatshops in the world. You find entry-level jobs being very accessible to immigrants because...well, for one thing, they don't pay that well. However, we have to look at promotion of minorities, and how do you propose we look? I think this is where we are sadly lacking.

I have said this before, and everyone is getting tired of hearing it, but when we have presentations before committee by a representative from the government, they either have an English accent or a French accent, depending on your ear, and they are 99.9% white.

How do we get a program of promotion? The government can't tell business to hire and promote if we aren't doing it ourselves. We have to set the example. Have you looked at those practices—they do exist—and the solutions?

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** The City of Toronto has a very extensive program, but even when you have the policies in place you have to make sure the practices are there, whether in setting goals and timetables or in making it a priority in your management that your management reflect the population we are serving.

Most recently, for example, the city has just gone through an administrative reorganization, and as part of that process, for the most senior positions, there was an equity monitor in the interviews. There were questions asked on diversity. They made sure the applicant pool was diverse. Those are the things to make.... First of all, it's making sure your applicant pool is diverse. Secondly, it is not a matter of hiring unqualified people—the qualifications are there and people have the background—it is that question of access.

**Ms. Lucille Joseph:** I can add to that.

In the Career Bridge program, the interns actually have an average of eight years of work experience, so they are going into organizations at a middle level. It is really taking them from having to start at the entry and move up, that they start at an internship—which is kind of a new idea, an internship for someone who is mid-career, but it works. That is one way to bridge it.

One thing we have observed, working the little bit we have with the settlement agencies, is that the attempt to have one size fit all, so that the same small agency is trying to deal both with folks who have come from very difficult circumstances and are trying to establish themselves here and with international professionals who have been extremely successful business-wise...and to try to differentiate some of those groups so that those who can set the pace and go in at a higher level in an organization have the right support systems, tailored to them, and not get caught up as much in some of the other support services.... I think that would also help to facilitate what you are speaking of.

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** I want to make a little comment here. One of the best ways to at least start gaining control of the problem of racism is to stop using that term. It is an antiquated concept. It has caused only trouble, as far as societies are concerned. The more people look for individual difference on the basis of race, the less they find, and I think we should stop attending very much to the phenomenon of racism and start looking at the phenomenon of performance based on individual differences that may have to do with a lot more things than just what we think to be some kind of genetic background of a person. We need to think scientifically and constructively about the extent to which we have invented this whole idea of race, and we need to start to dis-inventing it so that we can actually get to look at true differences between people and deal fairly with them.

•(1440)

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** The analogy that comes to mind on that is there was a time when no one talked about cancer, and therefore it was very difficult to do education; it was very difficult to do anything about it. If we don't name a problem, it becomes impossible to deal with it.

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** But the problem is not in race. There is something called cancer—I'm pretty sure of that—but there is not much called race that I know of. When you look most carefully at individual difference, the less and less you find it is related to race. Frankly, any uses that have been made of differences based on race have been extremely ill-tempered efforts.

**Ms. Sylvia Searles:** I would only suggest that at some other point you have a discussion with the racial minorities in the room to see if it is not real for us. But I don't want to get into the debate.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** I think you are starting to be like the House of Commons here.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** Dr. Klass, I agree we have to look beyond, but we don't have another name for it now and we know it is based on ignorance. There really are no racial differences, but it does have to be named.

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** But to tie a scientifically non-existent concept to it will do no good.

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** We still have to have a name for it.

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** Well, let us call it "ethnic differences". Let us call it whatever else we want, but—

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Do you have any other questions, Colleen?

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier:** No, sir. Thank you.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** I have one comment about something I believe Andi brought up—a youth conference or forum, or a national youth forum?

**Mr. Andi Shi:** Oh, a national conference, a newsletter.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Can you expand on that a little bit more?

**Mr. Andi Shi:** Well, there is very little sharing among the agencies that do the work of serving immigrants. If we could have an annual conference, then people have a forum to share their best practices. A lot of people are duplicating the same thing, or doing things not in the best way. If you could have all the best practices shared, I think there would be a lot of saving there; it would make a lot of sense.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Andi Shi:** I want to follow up on Mr. Klass' point about standards and access and doctors. In Ontario a lot of people have no access to a doctor. At the same time, we have thousands of foreign-trained doctors. I hear they are very well trained. They have been practising in their own countries for five, ten, or fifteen years.

I have big feelings about this. Why can't we have these people in a training program for six months, going through the departments with something like an internship to give them a chance to get familiarized with Canadian standards, and then have them start a practice and use their experience and skills?

So many times I have heard people say we don't want to lower the standard. In my opinion, it's not about lowering the standard. These people have experience. They have seen far more patients than many Canadian doctors. I don't think they are lowering the standard. I think it is just a matter of getting them familiar with the standard. Use them. I think that's a psychological barrier there.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Yes?

**Mr. Daniel Klass:** I think our programs speak directly to that concern, and our recommendations to you also speak directly to that concern.

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** Thank you.

I'd like to thank all of you for coming out and appearing, for giving us all your good information and good recommendations, and for listening to us. We are hearing from maybe a thousand people or so, going every day for almost the entire month of April.

Thank you for taking us out of the House of Commons as well, where the real fights are.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Chair (Mr. Lui Temelkovski):** We'll break for 15 minutes, and we'll be back at three o'clock.

• (1445)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1505)

**The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)):** We're going to start.

You'll give a five-minute presentation, after which committee members will ask questions. The exchange is supposed to take five minutes, but if it somehow gets out of hand, well, so be it, if the discussion is exciting and none of the members complain....

To start, we will have Ms. Raskovic for five minutes.

**Ms. Anica Raskovic (As an Individual):** My name is Anica Raskovic, and I am here as a community worker—as an individual, actually.

I would like to take this opportunity today to talk about two of the most vulnerable groups in our society. They are women without status living in abusive relationships and refugee women on social assistance. In order to talk about them, I will talk about real cases.

Now I am talking about women without status living in abusive relationships. I am going to begin with a real case, like I said, a woman who came to visit Canada 10 years ago. She married a Canadian citizen, but he has never sponsored her. To date they have three children, nine, seven, and four years old. She's a good mother and a good wife.

Her husband began to abuse her during her first pregnancy. He beats her, puts her down, and prohibits her from having friends, from working, and from going to school or church. She has endured abuse for 10 years and has never called the police because of her fear of being deported and never seeing her children again. Her husband keeps her without status and uses that as a tool of power. Every day he threatens that if she doesn't comply with his requests, he will call Immigration and they will arrest and deport her and she will never see her children again.

This is just one case, but there are thousands and thousands of women and children, Canadian children, living silently in abusive relationships. These women and children have been denied basic human rights to live a violence-free life. It is almost impossible for these women without status to get out of abusive relationships. Women without status, regardless of how many years they have lived in Canada and how many Canadian children they have, are not eligible for subsidized housing or day care, cannot receive child tax benefits, cannot have a work permit, and are not eligible for education, even an English as a second language class.

In the given circumstances, it is unrealistic to expect these women to improve their skills, to find a job, and to become self-sufficient. There is a possibility of applying on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, but a woman needs to have a job and also to prove that she cannot go back home, that she will face hardship. Also, she has to come up with money to pay for the application, which is over \$900, plus she needs to pay for a lawyer, and we all know very well that just 3% of humanitarian and compassionate applicants have been accepted and granted landed immigrant status.

Taking into consideration the tremendous hardship these women and children have been going through for a very long time, I urge you to grant landed immigrant status to women who are married to Canadians.

Also, I would like to talk about refugee women on social assistance. I am again starting with a real case, a refugee woman who came to Canada six years ago with three children, a three-month-old baby, an eight-year-old, and a twelve-year-old. This woman and her children waited six years to be reunited with her husband, the children's father.

Following the trauma of persecution and being uprooted, refugee women, especially mothers caring for pre-school children and whose partners were left behind, continue to face enormous hardship, stress, pressure, and humiliation in Canada. Often these women need to rely on social assistance, which, according to Canada's family class regulations, prevents them from sponsoring their spouses or other dependent children. The impact of prolonged family separation for women and children affected by war trauma has an immeasurable emotional toll and makes the process of integration into Canadian society very difficult.

Separating families prolongs the time a newcomer woman needs to acquire language and other skills necessary to find a job and become self-sufficient. This doesn't benefit even the Canadian economy, because, do you not all agree, allowing the husband and the father to come sooner would provide better chances for this family to become self-reliant and not dependent on social assistance?

• (1510)

I urge you to allow these women to reunite with their partners and children as soon as possible, allowing them to improve their health, general well-being, and ability to get out of poverty.

Thank you.

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

Next we'll have Ms. Nasi.

**Ms. Zheni Nasi (As an Individual):** Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming to Toronto today and for giving me the opportunity to share with you some of the issues around the recognition of the professional experience and credentials of skilled immigrants.

I am in front of you today as an immigrant with less than two years in Canada, who also happens to be a professional in the immigration field.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this presentation I have balanced my experiences and those of other skilled immigrants with existing

settlement practices and with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, IRPA.

There is a need for a process in place regarding the recognition of the professional experience and credentials of skilled immigrants. The problem is that IRPA itself has not put enough emphasis on this issue, the key first step in the integration of immigrants in the Canadian labour market.

Paragraph 3(1)(a) of IRPA, regarding immigration objectives, states one of the objectives is "to permit Canada to pursue the maximum social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration". Paragraph 3(1)(c) of IRPA says "to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy". Paragraph 3(1)(e) of IRPA says "to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society".

We'll go all the way to the last objective of IRPA, which says "to work in cooperation with the provinces to secure better recognition of the foreign credentials of permanent residents and their more rapid integration into society". Even as a last objective, it is vague and unclear. It seems like the legislator's job was done by including that statement into IRPA. No process of recognition is in place, and no federal-provincial cooperation is in place.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an unfinished work. I applaud the visionary work the federal government has accomplished with IRPA in principle, and I agree it is one of the best selection systems in the world. Having gone through the immigration process, however, I realize that one or two parties are not enough for it to be successful.

Canada established the immigration selection system because there were benefits in it, and my first recommendation is that every party that will benefit from immigration should take responsibility in this process.

A skilled immigrant deals only—

**The Chair:** I wonder if you could do a little summary, because you have three minutes but you have only two minutes left, so you're not going to make it.

**Ms. Zheni Nasi:** In that case I will just move to the recommendations.

My second recommendation is that IRPA should provide for the institutional infrastructure to complete de jure and de facto recognition of the professional practices and credentials of immigrants. By this I mean there are too many ways a skilled immigrant is assessed, and this includes knowledge of official languages, official translations of their credentials, medical assessment, and criminality assessment. This is done before they come to Canada.

Once they are in Canada they go through all their assessments, and it continues with credential assessment toward Canadian equivalency and language and qualification assessment by community agencies, post-secondary institutions, or government for participation in integration programs. Then there's a certification process they have to go through again, with another assessment. There are too many assessments, and this just discourages the immigrants until they find a job in their own profession.

For my third recommendation I say that applicants of the skilled immigrant class should be provided with clear information about all the professional assessments they will need before coming to Canada. More work must be done before an immigrant comes to Canada, and the language assessments should be reduced to one; there are too many language assessments.

For the regulated professions, the certification process should start as soon as the applicant has met the minimum required according to subsection 75(2) of the regulations. For the non-regulated professions, the immigration officer at the local visa office should provide the applicant with a package on labour market information specific to their chosen category of profession as soon as the applicant has met the minimum requirements. This package may include the certification process for the regulated profession, labour market trends in that professional category, information about employers in that field and headhunter recruitment firms in that field, and information about business communication courses they might want to start even before they come to Canada.

My last recommendation is that skilled immigrants should not be costly to the Government of Canada. The point I want to raise here is that they have already invested in training and education and have years of professional experience. In Canada they face the same challenges as any Canadian who would work abroad, namely professional networking and business communication in the Canadian way.

We must question whether the settlement programs are up to date on immigrant skills and needs. The same agencies cannot provide services both to refugees and to skilled immigrants. We must also look at whether the services of these agencies are up to date on the needs of the immigrants.

On a final note, I would like to ask you to put yourselves in the shoes of a skilled immigrant. What things would you like to know and what kind of preparation would you like to have before coming to Canada? What steps would you take to land that first job as soon as possible? These are some of the questions that, if answered clearly and thoroughly, will improve immigration policy and its implementation program.

Thank you for your time and attention.

• (1515)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Next we are going to go on to Ms. Croteau.

**Ms. Della Croteau (Deputy Registrar, Director of Programs, Ontario College of Pharmacists):** We appreciate the opportunity to present to you today. Chris Schillemore and I represent the Ontario College of Pharmacists in this presentation. We have been fortunate enough to be the part developers of an international bridging program for pharmacists in Ontario, and that's why we have come to speak to you today.

We are the licensing body for pharmacy in Ontario. There are about 10,000 pharmacists in Ontario, and about a quarter of those come from outside North America; we have traditionally licensed a lot of international graduates. We only have one faculty of pharmacy in Ontario. We don't produce enough pharmacists for Ontario, so we

have partnered with the faculty to provide a bridging program to international graduates who come to Ontario.

As pharmacy has changed in Canada and North America, we are becoming more primary health care providers, needing more patient assessment skills, drug and therapeutic monitoring skills, and, especially communication skills. It becomes more and more difficult for international graduates to meet that skill set requirement as they come to Canada.

During this international pharmacy graduate program—this bridging program that's now been in place for about five years—we've discovered some gaps. There are about four I would like to address with you today that are in our paper.

The major one is fluency in English. Even though many of these candidates are able to pass general fluency exams, the fluency and advanced communications that are expected in the professional fields are at a higher level. They have to learn medical and pharmacological terminology and then they have to translate it into lay language in another language, when English isn't their first language. Those are difficult tasks for anyone to perform. These are intelligent university graduates from another country, and as long as their English fluency is at a reasonable level we can educate them around these Canadian skills.

A second gap lies in the expectations of foreign immigrants to Canada. The previous speaker elaborated on that. As a licensing body we also have an issue with it, because people come to us and have an expectation they are going to be licensed and ready to practice very quickly as they come into the country. In fact, they need to ensure that their English skills are up to date and that they have their credentials. They can prepare for a lot of this before they come to Canada if they know what the requirements are. We have done a lot on the web to try to increase the information, but much more work needs to be done.

Recently, travelling in the Middle East, I saw tons of ads in the paper encouraging immigration to Canada, the U.K., and Australia. A lot of the information is being provided by private companies, not perhaps by our Canadian government, so I can see where the disconnect is.

Another gap is what we have called cultural competence. The expectations of Canadians around their health care are different from those in other countries. We have developed an extensive mentoring program within the bridging program to mentor new immigrants to Canada about the Canadian health care system, about what the expectations of Canadian patients are around their health care, and about communication concerning their health care.



The final gap is actually therapeutic or drug therapy knowledge. Depending on the country a person comes from, there are different therapeutics. In Canada we enjoy a wonderful health care system with a lot of drugs available to us. Some pharmacists come to us and tell us they come from a country where malnutrition and malaria are the most common disease states, and they need to adapt to a system where we have the good lifestyle diseases of heart disease and high cholesterol and high blood pressure. They're different therapeutics. It's not a problem as long as you have a good training system to update those folks in this.

• (1520)

As well, we have mutual recognition across Canada for pharmacists. So even though Ontario probably takes about 60% of those immigrants, there is a real need for this bridging education to be offered across Canada on a regular basis.

So our recommendations are that candidates be given accurate information before emigrating, for which we really are willing to work with the federal government and the provincial government to do whatever it takes to get some of this information to folks; that immigrants understand the level of English required to work as a professional in Canada; that we have common bridging education; that we consider financial support for refugees and people who have not been prepared for what it takes to come to Canada; and that if we are going to have an overall planning strategy of supplementing our workforce with international graduates, we make sure there is a continuous bridging education program available to graduates wherever in Canada they land.

We have provided you with some background materials about the international pharmacy graduate program and details, for those of you who are interested.

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

Next, we have Peter Ferreira.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira (President, Portuguese-Canadian National Congress):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present our proposals as they relate to the immigration concerns affecting the Portuguese Canadian community.

As president of the Portuguese-Canadian National Congress, and vice-president of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, and a former senior immigration officer, I'm fully confident in addressing our major concerns as outlined in the submission before you.

Promoting citizenship, addressing the needs of undocumented workers, and finding alternatives to deportation of long-time residents should top federal immigration priorities. Federal priorities on immigration are slipping further away from the needs of our community and the realities of the economy. We need a more balanced perspective on immigration that values people beyond their credentials and promotes their citizenship and inclusion.

Too many people of Portuguese origin contribute everyday to our economic growth and community life but are denied residence because of an immigration system that ignores the reality of Canada's labour market. Canada needs a workers-in-Canada program to bring undocumented workers into the mainstream. This would

allow the most vulnerable to gain the rights we all have as Canadian residents and to become regular taxpaying citizens. Automatically deporting long-term residents is an unjust practice; it fails to recognize that although individuals were not born in Canada, they were certainly made in Canada, having been raised, schooled, and married among us. These lives and families are destroyed and communities are stunted. It is time for our country, which has an exemplary human rights record, to remember and reconsider.

I'd like to highlight some of the major recommendations. I'll read just some of them to you, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the committee.

The particular needs of migrants whose country of origin is Portugal have less to do with formal recognition of trade or professional qualifications while in Canada than with a rethink of the point system as the core of independent class immigration, or skilled worker class, as it's referred to today.

The Portuguese-Canadian National Congress supports an immigration policy mix that includes individual initiative, a policy mix that is responsive to the needs of a willing employer and a willing worker and that can transform undocumented workers into regularized temporary workers.

The congress supports a system for sponsored and non-sponsored migration that recognizes successful integration into the Canadian workforce as the basis for permanent resident status.

The congress supports a worker-in-Canada program to not only regularize undocumented workers, but also to transform undocumented workers into future Canadian citizens.

In the area of the deportation of non-citizens, I refer specifically to those who have come to Canada as minor children. We believe that amending IRPA, specifically subsection 64(1), by deleting the words "serious criminality", is in order. Alternatively, we should alter the consideration of dead time; more specifically, we should not count dead time as punishment toward denial of access to an appeal to a tribunal with equitable jurisdiction, or, alternatively, if we must count it, we should count it as day for day, not as an enhanced detriment.

We should also allow the individuals who would otherwise be sentenced to a term of less than two years access to better rehabilitation programs at their option, without their having to request a longer sentence to access these programs.

Moreover, we should develop a largely objective basis for the point system to grant individuals punished by a term of two years or more, and therefore subject to automatic deportation, the right of appeal to a tribunal with equitable jurisdiction. This point system would weigh a number of circumstances, focusing largely on factors that can be verified independently and objectively. In order of priority, these would include, but not be limited to, age at time of immigration; number of years of residence; criminal record and risk of recidivism; threat to the public; dependent family in Canada; record of employment in Canada; and physical or mental health problems, including addiction. When the individual has satisfied the objective points test, he or she would have a right to appeal the deportation order to a tribunal with equitable jurisdiction.

More generally, we should review immigrant settlement programs and take extra measures to ensure that current permanent residents and future immigrants to Canada are informed of the advantages and disadvantages of Canadian citizenship.

This information should be made available in various languages.

• (1525)

In closing, in association with the provincial law societies, we should ensure that judges, crown prosecutors, and lawyers are informed of the possible consequences of criminal law for immigration status.

Thank you.

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

Next we have Mr. McLeod.

**Mr. Norman McLeod (Manager, Strategic Social Policy, Regional Municipality of Peel):** Thank you very much.

I convey the regrets of our chair, who originally was hoping to come to speak to you today. He is caught up in regional business today, so I have come here instead. It is my pleasure, and thank you for inviting us.

Two years ago, the Region of Peel tabled a formal resolution with the federal government, suggesting that we would be willing to pilot some innovative, locally based solutions to the integration of immigrants at the community level. It's my purpose today to renew that proposal or offer and to emphasize the role that municipal government can play as a gateway to the community.

The integration of immigrants into the labour force is a complex process, but it just so happens that the rubber hits the road in local communities and that municipal government is your gateway to meet with other sectors in the community. When we proposed this a couple of years ago, the federal government was considering a process called Canada's innovation strategy, and we thought they were onto something in putting together the sectors at the local levels and getting them working together.

We want to promote Peel as a potential pilot for this, because we are at the leading edge of this whole process. If you look at the GTA as a whole, you can of course see that we have the biggest concentration of immigrants in the country. If you look at the way it is happening now, at the dynamics, this is increasingly happening directly in the suburbs, in the 905 area. Peel's flow of immigration

has already gone from under 12% to over 20% in just three years, given the number of immigrants coming into the GTA. Immigrants are no longer coming to Kensington Market and migrating outwards generation by generation, but are coming directly to the burbs.

We have the leading edge of the whole issue here in Peel, and in many ways we can offer a fresh start. We don't have the long history of the downtown areas with settlement infrastructure going back for generations. That is a disadvantage to us—we are hugely behind—but it is also an advantage if you want to pilot new approaches to integrating immigrants. We offer this to you and our good offices to help make it happen.

• (1530)

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

Now we are going to a round of questions.

Ms. Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for your time and presentations. I have certainly learned a lot from them.

My question has to do with the fact that, on the one hand, we have a shortage of skilled people in Canada, but on the other hand, when people come here on the points system, their skills are recognized in their originating countries but are not recognized when they come here. So doctors drive taxis and engineers pump gas.

Something needs to be done here. Could you please tell us what should be done?

**Ms. Della Croteau:** As the Ontario College of Pharmacists...we desperately need pharmacists. We get a lot of pharmacists coming to Canada, and we work through a bridging program to assist these pharmacists in attaining the information required. Pharmacists go to university and do a training program to get it. Until we had actually created this bridging program, with the educational institutions taking a major part, it was just not available. How else do you train these folks?

We used to put them in a pharmacy and hope they would pick up the skills, but this is a much better system and a much more efficient system; they get the skills and training they need much more quickly, and they get mentored in the workplace in this program.

By the way, I should say that the employers are very happy with the graduates who come out of this program, and in fact many of them have actually supported people in the program in order to get the kind of professional they want in their workplace.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** That is a very good question.

My colleague, when she submitted her brief, suggested these advertisements that are found overseas...

In part, I'm to blame, because some of those advertisements are mine. As I indicated in my submission, I'm a former senior officer with the immigration department. I'm a paralegal consultant. I have offices in India and the Middle East, and you may have seen some of my ads.

In fact, my company brings over thousands of people every years, skilled people who on average have 17 years of education. They are pharmacists, dentists, accountants...everything.

I obviously sell Canada. That's my job. But I also owe them an explanation that once they get here, it's going to be extremely difficult to get their credentials recognized. I'm happy to hear that your association is dying for these people, and I'm assuming with that you are going to facilitate to the maximum—to a certain degree, the maximum—as much as you can. But this issue has been around for many years, and like yourself, I don't appreciate the fact that in the papers I read about these overqualified taxi drivers. This has to stop.

Not to dump on any one government, but I think the province needs to do more. Obviously, most of the accreditation process has to go through these government bodies, and the provincial government could be doing a lot more.

It's unfortunate, because I have clients who in fact give it a two- or three-year try, and we know what they end up doing, most of them. They end up going back, and that's sad. It's sad because we're losing out. Canada is no richer.

One of my colleagues suggested that these people are educated and it didn't cost us anything. Canada didn't spend a dime to educate these people. I don't want to question what the professional organizations are or are not doing. I truly believe they're doing all they can and they're going to one day alleviate this concern.

I see it on a daily basis and it frustrates me, because we are losing a lot of good people in the end.

• (1535)

**Mr. Norman McLeod:** The credentials are only part of the picture. Our region is very active in the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, and we have been wrestling with this issue around the table for a long time.

There is another dimension to the whole thing, which is experience. Many of the solutions that have been proposed have focused on the immigrants themselves, bringing them up to speed on what we have. In fact, we think there's a major job to be done to educate employers and help them to interpret not just the credentials but the experience of immigrants as well. Experience is often the biggest part of the problem, even for those who have credentials, and an employer who can't interpret or understand experience and doesn't know how to contact a reference is at a disadvantage in even assessing these.

So one of the proposals you'll find in our written submission is for the federal government to lead a campaign to educate business about the qualifications and experiences of immigrants. Once again, we think the best way to do that is to pilot it at the local level, to bring local employers together and offer them some help to interpret those skills.

**Ms. Anica Raskovic:** Even though I didn't talk about that, I can. I am an immigrant and I have the same problems. I think it's a really good question.

Sometimes I think the point system in itself is misleading for many immigrants, because if you are recruiting immigrants from around the world according to what profession they have, they expect that we in Canada respect that and that once they come they will be able to use those skills.

In my job, I work with children, youth, and families, but most parents are immigrants, and I've heard this problem over and over. When people tell me about their professional experience and about their credentials, I am always amazed. As you said, they are taxi drivers and cleaners, and it's okay for a while, but you all know that if people are out of their profession for a long time, it's very hard to go back.

So I think there should be some better system, maybe starting outside. Before they come to Canada, something should be done. People have to be better informed and maybe allowed to do something even in their country of origin before they come here.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We are going to go on to Monsieur Roger Clavet.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Raskovic, there are three things. You referred to immigrant women who are victims of assault or abuse and women on social assistance. Those are three heavy labels.

What can be done to rebuild these people's self-esteem? The situation isn't easy for immigrant women who are victims of assault and also on social assistance. Can immigration legislation do anything for these women's self-esteem?

• (1540)

[*English*]

**Ms. Anica Raskovic:** If I understand the question well, what can be done for these women's self-esteem, I think really when a woman is married to any Canadian, she should be granted landed immigrant status and later on an opportunity for getting Canadian citizenship. With what we allow now in the immigration law, a woman is dependent on her male partner and on whether he wants or doesn't want to sponsor her. There are many cases where a man uses this as a tool of power to abuse her. He doesn't want to sponsor her to be able to have complete power over her. So the solution is granting landed immigrant status immediately.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you. I have a question this time for Mr. Ferreira, from the Portuguese Canadian National Congress. I thank him for the excellent presentation he gave.

My question has to do with the consequences of criminal law on immigration status. This is the first time I have heard that there is an impact, when judges deliver a conviction or the lawyers and prosecutors seek one. Often, it doesn't occur to them that this could have an effect on an immigrant's status.

I'd like you to give me an example where such a conviction coming from a judge could have totally disastrous consequences for the outcome of an application for citizenship by an immigrant or new arrival.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** If I understand the question correctly, what we have from time to time are those who are convicted of relatively serious offences. We are not referring to murder or anything like that. We are talking about people who would, in many cases, get less than two years, but because they want to access assistance in the penal system, rehabilitation, they sometimes plead guilty and they get two-plus years.

With two-plus years, it's an automatic deportation. What we are saying is that we have to sensitize lawyers and others who work with that individual who is before the courts to make sure that these other factors are taken into account, as I listed them. I have knowledge of those who have been here since they were six months old or six weeks old. These people are as much Canadian as we are. The only difference is their parents or they never bothered to fill out the application, or they didn't know or realize they had to.

By bringing that to your attention, we hope the recommendation would come from this committee to the interested parties to take all things into account. We have people who are pushed through the system very quickly to expedite these matters, because, as we know, there are waiting lists, courts are bottlenecked, and there is much pressure to resolve these things in favour of the system.

Our point of view is that the lack of appeal rights is not right, is not just, for anybody who is convicted of something that gets two years and a day, or whatever. When they took the appeal rights away...because at one time, if you recall, these people would be able to go to the Immigration Appeal Board. That is not the case any more. I am saying maybe we should visit that again, because it seemed to work.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** I have one last question, this time for Mr. McLeod, council member from the Regional Municipality of Peel.

You made an offer to the Government of Canada in 2003. It is rare to see a region or city so enthusiastic about receiving immigrants. Immigrants already make up 43 per cent of the population of Peel.

Did the federal government accept your pilot project offer to do employment training programs in 2003? They should have jumped on the opportunity. Did the federal government say yes to that proposal?

• (1545)

[English]

**Mr. Norman McLeod:** I wouldn't be here if they had; in fact, that's why we are renewing the offer. We see the need more and more, and as we become more engaged in this issue, we have a more clear understanding of what needs to happen as well. We are renewing the offer because, no, nobody...we did receive, of course, a polite response from the minister, but I think there was an election in between and a few other changes.

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** And it will include Brampton and Mississauga as well?

**Mr. Norman McLeod:** Brampton and Mississauga and Caledon. Those are the three municipalities that—

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you, Mr. McLeod.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I thank all of you for your presentations this afternoon; they have been very helpful. I know that when you are sharing your personal story, it is often more difficult in a forum like this, so thank you.

Mr. McLeod, I have a question for you. Are there any success stories of immigrants getting work in the region of Peel with small and medium businesses? That is one of the things you mentioned, that there are over 75,000 businesses in the region. We have heard of success stories with large corporations, but we don't often hear of anything with small or medium businesses, and I wonder if you know of any in your region that you can share with us.

**Mr. Norman McLeod:** I hope I will bring those stories to you someday, but that is part of the purpose of our whole offer. In fact, we understand that is where the action has to be, that the majority of the jobs are in the small and medium businesses. We have access through a local network to those kinds of businesses. We think that is the way to go.

We are piloting the mentor program in Peel. The Region of Peel is working with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council on piloting specifically in Peel, and we see that, hopefully, as one of the outcomes of that.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** But that has not started yet.

**Mr. Norman McLeod:** It is just starting now.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Ferreira, you mentioned that you are one of those people who advertises overseas, so I can't resist a few questions to you about that. You also mentioned that we are losing immigrants who come here and are unhappy with the circumstances.

We have heard a lot about the need to get people better information about coming to Canada. We have also heard that potential immigrants tend to be among the most optimistic and hopeful people in the world, often meaning that they don't hear the negative stuff easily. So I would suspect you've had clients who you tried to be clear with, and they've come and been disappointed and left.

I am just wondering if you can share from your own experience what might help in terms of the kind of information we provide people, and how we can help them understand that information or hear it more clearly than seems to be the case now.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** Yes, I'm one of those who in fact goes beyond and tells them that in many cases they may find that Canada is not the country they had envisioned, but with hard work, sacrifice, and a lot of door knocking, they will be successful. Canada is still a land of opportunity.

Those who have gone back may think I'm somewhat misleading them, but of course when you have statistics such as it being the best country in the world for six or seven years running, it's very easy to sell the concept of Canada.

It's a fact that people have gone back, wherever they're from. I'm more familiar with the Indian subcontinent because most of my clients are from that part of the world and from China.

What could the Canadian government do that it isn't doing? While they have brochures at Canadian visa offices with glossy photographs, wonderful mountains, and quality of life...this is the kind of stuff I take with me on my area trips. So I'm obviously there selling Canada, and I'm one of those roving ambassadors, very proud to be Canadian.

Of course, we have individuals who are looking to Australia and to other countries, and they are looking to the U.S., obviously. Some of them are using Canada as a back door to get into the U.S., not for the reason you may think, but for the right reason—not that you were thinking of that, but so much has happened since 9/11 that I have to watch what I say, because when I say they're intending to go to the U.S., they are obviously intending on becoming successful and established in the U.S., some of them. So we do lose some to the U.S. That's obvious.

I think the Canadian embassies and visa offices overseas could provide more information on the accreditation process. They could provide more information with respect to how these people can contact these bodies. They don't do that. I'm doing that myself, because if I don't do that....

These are intelligent people we're talking about. We're talking about people with a lot of education. While my submission dealt mainly with the uneducated or those with low education, just because of my submission and because of the people I represent, that's why I suggested in my brief that we should have a mix.

The point system, as it is today, hampers my community. There's probably no immigration from Portugal, as we see it, with the exception of parents and grandparents, but of skilled labour, there's practically none. You might be lucky to find 20 or 30 who immigrate here, when you compare that to 25,000, compared to the Indian continent.

So I think through the visa offices—while they're overworked, and I know this—the government could at least provide information, be it on their government website or in hard copy, to a lot of these people.

I'm doing it on my own. I have links to the *Star*. I have links to the provincial governments. I'm hoping some of my clients will go into those links, and of course I'm hoping they will find their way to these associations that will govern their professional lives.

So I don't think it's going to cost too much money for the government to do this. We're not talking about millions and millions of dollars. We are talking about printing a few brochures with useful information. We're trying to convince these people to come over. We want them to be truly established. In fact, as you know, they all need a minimum amount of funds to secure their adaptation. We're talking about a six-month period, and if you're single, \$10,000. If you don't have \$10,000 to your name, you're not coming. But it's almost like this is all we're interested in. You have the \$10,000 that you need in case you're unemployed for six months? Okay, good. But there's not much else that's coming.

I have been doing this for 30 years. I started in 1975. I've been in and out of government. While I'm proud to a certain degree of what I do...“proud” is not the right word; while I'm content that I'm providing my clients with the information they need, I too cannot cover all the angles. There is only so much I can do. So I think the government could partner more in this area.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I can assure you that you got extra time there.

Mr. Temelkovski.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for their presentations today.

I'd like to just continue with you, Peter. Do you think consultants have enough educational and professional requirements to become consultants within Canada?

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** For the longest time, sir, I didn't believe so. I still have my reservations, but I will explain why I just said what I said.

Until about a year ago I was the director of the Organization of Professional Immigration Consultants, OPIC, which is no more. Our organization had been pushing the federal government for the last 15 years. We were paying lobbyists to lobby the immigration minister to come in with regulations for immigration consultants. We finally got them last year. It took about 15 years. It appeared that nobody wanted to do this in Ottawa. Now I am a full member of CSIC, the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants.

There are a lot of others who've passed their exams so far, but this is a preliminary exam. We're going to have to sit another exam by the end of the year. I'm hoping we can weed out a lot of those people who can study but don't have the practical experience and the knowledge that's going to provide clients with a satisfactory service.

So I have reservations still. I'm a lot happier now that we have CSIC on board. It's a government-regulated body that oversees my actions.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Could I, as a citizen, go and recruit people to come from other countries? Do I need to meet any requirements like you do, or are you restricted to travel outside?

• (1555)

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** You only need to meet this requirement if you're signing an application on your client's behalf, and you're acknowledging that you've handled his application.

What you're going to find is that a lot of people who will fail the test will be acting as consultants behind the walls and not affixing their names or a company name to those applications. They will make it appear that their clients are applying on their own.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** I have one final question about this. Is there much more than assist with the application that a consultant can do with CIC? Can you influence—

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** No. Some of my clients may think I can influence the employees at CIC, but that's something we stay away from completely. I'm hoping that my good reputation will also go a long way towards my client's success, but I don't bank on it. If a client comes to me who is not eligible for immigration, I tell the person right off the bat, "You don't speak English; you don't qualify. You don't have the 15 years of education that's required."

So what happens in many situations is that you do get people who are less than scrupulous who will tell their clients that they qualify when they don't. I mean, I can only answer for myself. I know how I handle myself.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you.

Ms. Croteau, in terms of the pharmacy profession, we've heard from some pharmacists, and we've heard from the association as well. Applicants are allowed to write the exam to be a pharmacist twice, and after that they are not allowed to write it any more.

Is there any separate requirement for foreign-trained pharmacists, seeing how there's a shortage of pharmacists in Canada?

**Ms. Della Croteau:** Well, our approach has been to educate them so that they can meet the requirements. Hundreds of people have now gone through our bridging program. Our success rate—it's in the brief—is about 96% on those exams from the graduates who go through it. Our approach has been, rather than make people keep on writing exams, to give them the knowledge and skills they need to pass the exams and to practice in Canada.

The Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada will be coming, I believe, to speak with you. All of the provinces use the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada as the licensing exam board. So our approach provincially has been to ensure that these folks have the knowledge and skills so that the exam is not an issue.

If we're teaching the same things that we're teaching our own University of Toronto graduates, who also have a 96% pass rate or whatever, then they would have equal opportunity.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Are there many differences between German-trained pharmacists and Canadian-trained pharmacists?

**Ms. Della Croteau:** We don't have a whole lot of German-trained pharmacists. A lot of our pharmacists come from Egypt, India, Pakistan—all over the world—but we get very few European pharmacists. There's a shortage of pharmacists in Europe, so we would get very few immigrants from Europe.

We would have a very similar practice to the U.K., Australia, South Africa. There are some countries our practice is more similar to.

Degree pharmacists in India, for example, most often work in the pharmaceutical industry and manufacturing of drugs, which are very good jobs in India, and they're well respected for that. When they come to Canada, that's not...they don't need to be licensed here to have that practice. It's a totally different system, and if they want to practise Canadian pharmacy, they have a different skill set. So there's a misunderstanding.

Might I also add that they usually require at least one year of training, and I believe that a candidate would be very lucky to meet all the requirements in one year. Often they come with a family. So

again, a lot of them have said to us—because they are practising pharmacists in their own country—that we need to prepare them to be able to support their family for this time, that had they been better prepared, they wouldn't be in this difficult situation. They're trying to go to the bridging program and still maintain a job so that they can pay the rent.

We could better prepare them. Because they are professionals, and they could have those funds available—\$10,000.

• (1600)

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** I have one more question for Peter. Maybe you can comment on this.

You mentioned that Canada doesn't spend a dollar for these professionals who are trained outside, and I think you put that in a positive light, that we don't have to spend a dollar.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** That's right.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** What do you think about the flip side of that?

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** I see it as a win-win situation for Canada. I don't know what the flip side would be, but at this point in time—and I know it's not really what I discussed in this submission—arguing for a lowering of the pass mark or the bar.... But the flip side...I don't know. I think I'm positive at heart, and I think Canada doesn't spend.... Obviously, if you have somebody coming over to Canada who falls through the cracks.... Canada is going to have to—

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Let me help you. What would you think if we had a hundred pharmacists a year leaving Canada and going somewhere else? That's the flip side.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** That's right. Okay, now I understand the question.

Yes, and that's happening. I'm not sure if I'm correct, but they're going south—for sure they're going south. It's not just those who sell drugs over the Internet; they're actually physically going. Those aren't pharmacists.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** In bringing them in from South Africa or Somalia or somewhere else, do we have international obligations to these countries? It costs that country \$100,000 to train the pharmacist.

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** Some of these countries would see it as theft, yes. But then again—

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Would we see it as theft if they left?

**Mr. Peter Ferreira:** If they left? I guess we would see it as a negative return on our investment. I don't know if that's theft, but, yes, it could be.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Okay, thank you.

**The Chair:** You raised a very interesting point, Mr. Ferreira, and it's one that we've talked about before. It's about taking away citizenship or putting out of the country kids who came here as children; it doesn't matter if they were six months old or six days old or six years old, but for whatever reason, they failed to get their citizenship, and then we get overzealous and kick them out of the country. Now, they didn't come here as problem kids; anything that happened, happened in this country. So if one wants to talk about social responsibility, we are not being very socially responsible in returning somebody to a country where they might not speak the language and might not even be able to survive. The flip side to that is somebody doing it to us in reverse, or if somebody comes here from someplace else and doesn't speak the language.

In the last proposed citizenship act—and I think this is important—we were proposing to offer citizenship to adopted people, as soon as their adoption papers were completed, which is a good thing. Now, these people could have been here for 20 years, and it was suggested to us that they really were de facto citizens, which I tend to think they were and are.

I think we really have to re-examine that, because it really causes a lot of problems in families when the kid gets into trouble. He is now 20 years old and is shipped out of the country, and what's the rest of the family supposed to do? When dealing with institutions, I know we like to keep the family as close to an institution as possible.

It's an issue that you don't have to be shy about, and I hope all of you will think about it and let us know. It's hard to separate those kinds of things from the social life of people coming here, because obviously if they come here and lose a family member it's going to be a problem.

The other thing I want to mention, which tie into the citizenship angle of it, is that in looking at the citizenship act, we are looking at the preamble, we are looking for a citizenship oath, and we are hoping to get input on these, as well as on family reunification, because that again touches on people being satisfied with being in this country.

The other big question we have is the 60-40 split. Some people say it should be 40-60. We have had evidence before us where, say, somebody comes to Canada in the economic class and makes \$30,000, but is very unhappy because they are not practising their trade, whereas somebody who comes here in the family class and is making even less money is happy, because of a different kind of orientation. So that 60-40 split is something to be looked at. When you come to Canada, does that mean you will never get to see your parents again in terms of close contact? I know it's a real problem with the communities that honour the older generation much more than we do, in terms of having them live in the same household and in having a totally different culture.

So anyway, that's a question you might respond to, and we would be glad to take it.

Mr. Siksay has a question, which I'll let him have because he certainly didn't get as much time as Mr. Temelkovski.

• (1605)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I have done well this afternoon, Mr. Chair, but thank you.

I wanted to ask Ms. Nasi if she wanted to comment on the issue of the kind of information people need overseas, the whole question of immigrants being optimistic, and what would help people appreciate the kinds of situations they will face in Canada. I know you raised that in your presentation, and I heard Mr. Ferreira on that, but I wondered if you had some suggestions or further comments on that.

**Ms. Zheni Nasi:** Well, I think what happens for the skilled immigrants is the whole process of coming to Canada starts with the application and finishes when they land here. This is why I said this is unfinished work, because if we want to get the maximum out of immigration, we have to look beyond when they come to Canada and they are landed, at what happens after that.

So if someone is in a regulated profession, I strongly believe that the information about a regulated profession, specifically, should be provided as soon as someone meets the minimum requirement to be in the skilled immigrant class. In these circumstances they can get the package with all the information they need.

If a skilled immigrant-to-be is not in a regulated profession, then information can be provided to them.

I can bring you many examples of success stories, where skilled immigrants, even in the first year, will get a six-digit salary just by going through the recruitment firm. That's why I say they are an investment. They have invested in training and education. What they need is networking in their professional field and maybe some business communication in Canadian terms.

So we have to change the model here, and we have to provide more information once they are abroad. In my case, and in many others I know of, I did not go through a consultant. This is one good thing. The Government of Canada has made it very easy for skilled immigrants to come here on their own, so they don't necessarily need to go to a lawyer or to a consultant. But all the information is not there.

I got the beautiful side of it just from the Canadian visa office. No one misled me on the outside—not me in person. I am saying that no one is misleading all the skilled immigrants coming here.

What we can do best is offer as much information as possible. For example, to get the wife's credentials, someone doesn't need to be here. There are many things that can be done before coming here, and this is my whole point.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Ms. Raskovic, I'm going to press my luck here. I wonder if you could comment.

You said that the H and C process was so complicated that it was often inaccessible to people. I wonder if you could expand on that. You talked about it being expensive, that you have to prove danger overseas, and that sort of thing, so that it wasn't necessarily the easiest or best option for the women you were describing.

• (1610)

**Ms. Anica Raskovic:** For a woman without status living in an abusive relationship, her only option for getting out of an abusive relationship is to apply for humanitarian and compassionate grounds. In order to qualify for this application she needs to have a job and to be financially able to live on her own.

I will describe a situation in which she would not usually be able to apply. Sometimes you meet a woman who has been living in Canada for 10 years but she knows only a few words of English because she is not allowed to go out.

Besides that, in order to qualify she needs to prove that there is a danger when she goes back to her country of origin, that she will go through hardship, and she needs to live in Canada more than seven years and to have the cost of the application. I don't know exactly, but it's more than \$900. So she has to come up with that money. She also needs a lawyer, for sure. She cannot do that on her own, so again she needs money for a lawyer.

I said that most applications on humanitarian and compassionate grounds are denied. Only 3% are successful. It is the fact.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much for coming forward and giving your time. I know you say thank you for hearing you, but we thank you for giving us input. We will be compiling reports on the different topics that we are consulting on across the country. As I mentioned, if you want to send something in, by all means do so. You can also follow us. We do have quite interesting discussions and witnesses with some of the best minds on the issues, and you can find us on the citizenship and immigration committee website. When we are all said and done we are going to have our able researcher, Mr. Ben Dolin, send everybody a copy of the reports on the issues they appeared on.

So thank you very much, and thank you for your interest.

We will suspend the meeting for about fifteen minutes.

•(1610) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1625)

**The Chair:** We'll now reconvene the hearing.

I would like to welcome all of you. If you have been watching, you will know we are dealing with three basic topics. Today we will have you make a five-minute presentation, and since there are eight of you, we want to make sure we are pretty close to that, because we want to be able to ask some questions as we get into it.

We will start off with Hong Zhu, for five minutes.

•(1630)

**Ms. Hong Zhu (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I am honoured to be here today as an immigration researcher and as an immigrant myself. I'll keep it short.

As I stated in my brief, I investigated 39 Chinese independent immigrants' integration experiences from 1997 to 2004. I am going to answer the question, are problems in labour force integration evidence of shortcomings in Canada's immigration program, and if so, what changes should be made to federal policies relating to skilled worker recruitment.

I am going to state three related findings and make four recommendations.

The first finding is that in order to survive, and especially in order to provide for their children a stable life, many Chinese independent

immigrants, or CIIs, had to take general labouring jobs instead of using their expertise. Of the 39 CII participants, 18 had labouring work experiences. In the long run, as Maslow, said, "intelligent people leading stupid lives in stupid jobs" will cause mental pathology, cause family disharmony, and further result in social problems.

Two, in order to integrate into Canadian workplaces, CIIs used different strategies to transform their human capital, which included co-op academic programs, work placement programs, and starting again from a lower level of one's chosen career. The decisive shared element of all these strategies is to directly enter workplaces. Within workplaces, immigrants can acquire both Canadian work experience and related corporate culture.

Three, official language proficiency—here, English—is the key to all dimensions of immigrant integration. English puts forth its power directly as a form of human capital, as a medium for presenting other forms of human capital, and as a symbolic power throughout immigrant integration. Also, CIIs often lack sufficient English communicative competence to utilize their potential and hence require advanced ESL training for particular professions. However, current immigrant ESL programs were designed decades ago for basic literacy training, which cannot satisfy immigrant professionals' special needs.

I make four recommendations.

First of all, the federal government should make clear whether the mission of immigration is simply to increase population, import general labour, or empower the intellectual workforce. With a clear mission, integrate immigrant recruitment with human resource development, adjust categories in the annual immigration plan according to the needs of economic development, and resume in-person interviews with applicants instead of using the results from language tests.

Secondly, keep government credentials for immigrant professionals identical to those of Canadian professional associations, and accomplish examination and recognition of applicants' educational and professional credentials abroad before they land in Canada. This will avoid wasting immigrants' human capital and save Canada's resources as well.

Thirdly, fund immigrant transformative education programs as one part of mainstream education, and use the funding directly on individual immigrants through sending them to co-op training programs, internships, and other apprenticeship programs. Integrate language training into workplace training, and send immigrant professionals to their chosen profession workplaces where they can acquire both language and cultural competence through working with Canadian colleagues.

Fourth, I advocate that employers hire immigrant professionals through two routes. First, governments should lead by example through increasing the proportion of immigrants for government employment. Immigrant employees should be seen and heard in all levels of government.



•(1635)

Second, government should encourage other employers to recruit immigrant professionals through financial subsidies, such as tax deductions for companies that hire a certain proportion of new immigrants.

To conclude, if recruiting immigrant professionals fits Canada's interests, the federal government should take on the obligation of utilizing their intelligence and skill; otherwise, Canada will be responsible for wasting this huge human capital.

The solutions are very clear. Provide immigrant professionals in-work training, official language training, and access to workplaces where they can use their intelligence and professional skills.

Thank you very much.

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

Just for the members of the committee, we just got presented Ms. Zhu's PhD thesis, and it reads, "To the Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, thank you all for your commitment to Canada's nation building". It's about 370 pages long, so we'll give it to Ben, and he'll reduce it for us. And, of course, we'll get Ms. Zhu in to test Ben to make sure he read the whole thing.

That's really great.

I have to mention to you—and I hate repeating myself, but just in case you missed it—our committee has 12 members. Six of them were not born in Canada. We have the two refugees in the House of Commons on the committee. I was a refugee from Hungary in 1957. I put that out there because it says something about the kind of country we have.

Let me say we don't defend the status quo. We are very much a committee that picked the topics we wanted to study, and these are the topics that we really thought were important.

Now, while Mr. Siksay and Monsieur Clavet were born in Canada, they very much have a great deal of empathy for newcomers, and that really is the situation with our committee as a whole.

Thank you very much, Ms. Zhu.

Now we have Shuyang Wang.

**Mr. Shuyang Wang (As an Individual):** Hello. My name is Shuyang Wang, and I'm a new immigrant to Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the importance of the recognition of the international experience and credentials of new immigrants in Canada.

I'm going to talk about my own experience as a newcomer to Canada. I have been in Canada for nearly two years. Before I moved to Canada, I already had 14 years of professional experience as an IT—information technology—professional, including four years of professional experience as a senior IT specialist at IBM. In addition, I have five international certifications in the IT field.

When I was applying for the independent immigrant visa in 2000, the job market in the computer field was flourishing in North America. The application process lasted more than three years. My landed immigrant visa was approved in 2003. In the meantime, I was

doing very well at IBM. I was assigned to provide support in project implementation at IBM in the United States for a year. Surprisingly, I noticed that I was qualified to immigrate to Canada just days before I was supposed to move to the United States.

I chose to immigrate to Canada, following my dreams and hopes of a better future for my family and myself.

When I came to Toronto in June 2003 I faced the hardship of being a newcomer. It took me more than a year to learn English. At the same time, I was attending various employment programs that helped me to gain skills in writing résumés and strategies for finding jobs. However, this was not helpful in finding a professional job. Furthermore, some companies were taking advantage of newcomers' skills and knowledge by using them without paying for them, all in the name of providing Canadian experience.

I invested all my energy and enthusiasm to adjust and integrate into this new country. I heard from the locals that what you know is less important than whom you know, and I actively involved myself in different networks, such as Parent Advisory Network at St. Christopher House and Parents for Action Now, a voice for parents in Toronto's west end. This involvement has enabled me to meet many skilled, highly educated, and experienced immigrants who are facing similar situations. Most of us agree that a stable, meaningful job presents the most important factor in our adjustment and integration into Canadian society.

I tried to enter the Career Bridge program a year ago, but the criteria were so high that I was not accepted. I applied for the mentoring program at the beginning of this year, and I was told to wait until the beginning of February for the employee orientation and for a mentor to be assigned to me. I'm still waiting. I contacted them and they said I should continue waiting.

I have proof that I can do my professional job well, as I occasionally provide IT consulting services for a local company.

During these two years of looking for a professional job I spent all my savings, and I did not have any other choice but to find general labour work to survive. I'm aware that the longer I am out of my profession, the harder it will be for me to enter it. I'm a very positive thinker despite the difficulties I face. But lately, I feel and think that I have made the wrong decision in coming to Canada. Living in these circumstances for a long period of time has been very detrimental to the health of many newcomers. My hopes and dreams are vanishing, affecting my self-esteem and general feeling of well-being.

I urge you to implement more employment programs, with upgraded capacity, that will be accessible to all newcomers, enabling them to gain valuable Canadian professional experience and to demonstrate their professional knowledge and skills. I'm expecting that these programs will eventually lead newcomers to a real professional job.

In addition, I'm hoping that you will implement a better system of providing information to newcomers.

Thank you.

•(1640)

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

Next, we have Magdalena Szmygin.

**Ms. Magdalena Szmygin (Journalist, As an Individual):** Good afternoon. My name is Magdalena Szmygin. I am a lawyer. For the benefit of our future consideration, I feel it crucial to explain what this means.

Being a lawyer in Poland in the eighties meant to be on the top of the professional and social mountain. For some reason, the way of obtaining the right to practise this profession was very different than it is in Canada. Unlike here, we usually had to complete an initial exam, at least to practise as prosecutors, before we had the right to enter the legal profession. So those who were lawyers in Poland at this time were highly educated, but also had all the features derived of being an elite profession.

We had pride in our profession as well as high standards of professional ethics. We would rather lose a client than give him bad advice. We would rather lose a case than play in a dirty, socially unacceptable way. The ultimate ethics and expertise were what lawyers represented. Being a lawyer was being an advocate, a defender of people's rights. In Polish, lawyer is "*adwokat*". We would also consider it our duty to help any newcomer who was a lawyer in his own country especially get into the profession as soon and as painlessly as possible.

This longish introduction was very important. I hope it helped to clear up the reasons for some of my past decisions that now, even to me, look naive and were based more on assumptions and not on reality.

It also leads us directly to my recommendations. If I had met a mentor instead of so-called lawyer friends at the beginning of my Canadian life, I would have already been a lawyer and a great one.

Had I chosen not to become a lawyer, I would have done much better in terms of utilizing my skills within my well-planned career. This is why a special internship is a necessary element of any acceptance package that you may be preparing for qualified immigrants. It's my second recommendation.

I would have also felt much more confident if I had had a chance to have support from a strong, helpful organization that would have been able to help me with my professional day-to-day life and transitional problems. This is my third recommendation, I believe.

Finally, I would have done much better if the overall attitude towards aliens in the society of employers would have been different, if instead of trying to find the kindest ways of conveying the almost automatic refusal, my not-to-be employers had decided to really understand where my advantages lay.

Finally, the best problems will not be efficient until society, or at least professional groups, understand what being a lawyer, a doctor, a veterinarian, an IT professional meant back then in our countries of origin, and, in the reverse, unless a lawyer, doctor, veterinarian, or IT professional, etc., understands what it means to be a Canadian professional. All possible changes in the system of recognition should be based on this element—mutual understanding and acceptance.

Thank you very much for inviting me. Thank you very much for your time. As I stated in my written presentation, I am free to help in whatever endeavours you have.

• (1645)

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

We are going next to Mr. Benjamin.

**Mr. Chris Benjamin (Coordinator, Volunteerism and Diversity, Human Resources, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority):** Thanks for having me here.

My name is Chris Benjamin. I work for the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. I just wanted to talk briefly about my experiences in the environmental industry working with new Canadians.

I'm the volunteer coordinator and also the diversity coordinator with TRCA, so I get a lot of new Canadian environmental professionals who are seeking to gain Canadian experience, which is what they're told they need in order to get a job. So they're volunteering to work toward employment, and I try to help them make that connection by identifying opportunities for them, giving them volunteer experience, giving them training, whatever we can do.

One of the things we've come across is that a lot of employers in this sector—and probably in most sectors, I think—don't understand the credentials that are being presented to them by new Canadians. And I've seen this happen where people undervalue a degree from any other country.

So, for example, you might see a person with a Russian biology degree, and the assumption is that it's not at the same level as a Canadian degree, so it's knocked down to the next level and considered equivalent to a diploma instead of a degree. The reality is that the Russian degree is as good, if not better, because often the bachelor's degree in eastern European countries in fact can be an extra year long, and that's an extra year of training their graduates have. So that's one example.

On the other hand, when people do get their certifications evaluated by organizations like World Education Services, employers don't really recognize it or know what that is. So there's not enough awareness yet of those programs. Although they do a lot of good things, they're not totally effective just because of a lack of awareness.

The other thing we find is that a lot of the time new Canadians who do make it to the interview stage will make mistakes because they're operating on a different set of cultural assumptions. So, for example, in the planning sector, instead of choosing the most sustainable route, they choose the most economical route for a pipe. This is something that has happened in a few instances in interviews that we've observed in our own studies.

From my perspective, I think there are two sides that need to be addressed, and one is on the immigrant side itself, providing the proper training, like local context training, accreditation, mentorship, and internship programs. But there's also the employer side, and I think a lot more needs to be done in training employers in what it means to hire a new Canadian—what to expect, what it means when you see a degree from another country, and what the cultural differences to be aware of are. Employers just need cultural training and also to build their awareness about this hugely skilled human resources pool of talent that they need access to. So there needs to be the two sides of the coin.

The other brief point I want to make is that I think we also need a lot more cooperation between government levels. From my perspective, something that seems to be lacking is working provincially, federally, and with municipalities, and with the private sector and with the non-profit sector. We really need a more comprehensive effort to help people integrate into the economy that begins before people come to Canada and continues when they get here.

That's all I have to say. I also want to say that I have to run out at 5:30, so I'm sorry about that, but thank you for having me.

• (1650)

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

We're going to go to Mr. Timothy Owen.

**Mr. Timothy Owen (Director, World Education Services):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Timothy Owen and I'm the director of World Education Services.

Actually, I certainly support many of the points that Chris just mentioned.

We are all aware of what the problems are, and I think part of the challenge here is getting to the solutions. I'd like to speak to those and to the role that organizations like ours can play in addressing the problems and coming up with solutions.

We know there is an international competition for highly skilled labour and that Canada has a great track record in selecting and integrating highly skilled individuals from around the world, but there is growing competition for them, and I think Canada is going to lose its good reputation if it can't build its capacity to integrate the highly skilled in this global society of ours. We are also in a fight for the best foreign students, who will likely become the future workforce. I think we have to look at this in the context of the recognition of foreign credentials.

World Education Services, or WES, is an international not-for-profit organization that evaluates foreign credentials. Although we are independent, we are the recognized evaluation service of the provincial Government of Ontario, and we have been for the last five years.

We have a mission to facilitate the internationally trained individual's access to employment and to higher education through the provision of accurate and well-recognized credential evaluations. We have a computerized database that allows us to access hundreds of thousands of precedents from our previous credential evaluations, and that also has information on over 40,000 educational institutions

around the world. We expect to assess about 9,000 to 10,000 files this year of individuals who present their credentials to us.

We are part of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services across the country. There are five different provincially recognized credential evaluation services—in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario—and together we form an alliance, which is really a quality assurance alliance. We promote principles of good practice in the assessment of foreign credentials, and these standards are consistent with the best practices articulated by UNESCO.

We are served by a secretariat, supported through the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials. CICIC, as it's known, is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. So there's a great alliance within the different provincial bodies responsible for education.

Part of our role is to promote transparency in the way in which foreign credentials are evaluated in Canada; to promote their portability across the country; to ensure there is greater consistency in the outcomes when credentials are evaluated; and to promote greater awareness of these in the broader community. As Chris just said, while these services are available, they are not widely recognized by employers.

Last year the members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services assisted about 27,000 individuals across the country who presented credentials to them.

Now, unlike many of the assessments done in-house by occupational regulatory bodies or by post-secondary institutions, of which there are many, as you've probably heard, the evaluations done by members of the alliance provide a formal written report that can be used by the individual in many different ways for the rest of their life. In fact, it can be used for employment purposes, or it can be presented to employers, to regulatory bodies, and to higher education institutions, or for access to apprenticeship programs. Both the individual who has the credentials and the institution to which they are applying would receive a copy of this formal report.

The report attests to the authenticity of the diploma, the status of the institution, and the comparable Canadian degree or diploma, which are three things that regulatory bodies and academic institutions and employers are all looking for. Many times they complain that they don't know the status of the institution, or they can't be sure that the documents haven't been forged. The reports that we produce are that assurance.

The reports can also be used in conjunction with any other steps that may be used to determine eligibility for admission to a regulatory body, or for admission to an institution of higher learning, or for employment.

•(1655)

In fact, our reports are used by many of the regulatory bodies across the country to assist in the admission of people or to see whether they are eligible to write the exams for admission into the licensed professions. About 100 different regulators and 150 post-secondary institutions across Canada use one of these evaluation services on a regular basis—although, as you know, many of them don't, especially some of larger regulatory bodies. We believe that in cooperation with these regulatory bodies, we can provide assistance that would speed up the process of assessing foreign credentials and speed the process of those people being admitted into the professions.

I have four recommendations. I really think that behind it all, if we are going to make any progress in this area, we must have better cooperation between the provincial governments and the federal government. We know there are issues across Canada in this area of education, but without real cooperation, we are not going to make any progress. Since the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services is a pan-Canadian alliance and is representative of the governments in the provinces, it actually has a very good basis for being able to provide that support.

The recommendations really are for the federal and provincial governments to collaborate in promoting the use of these services, both to individuals in their pre-departure stage of emigration and to employers and other end-users in Canada, so that people are aware that these services exist; that they provide a credible and reliable resource; and that, as Chris said, when somebody sees a report, they will know what to do with it.

I think we also need to have cooperation amongst the governments in developing and promoting pan-Canadian standards for credential evaluation. You have heard from regulators, and you may have heard from post-secondary institutions, that they have their own systems. Well, there are common international standards to assess foreign credentials, and I think it would be worth our while to develop a pan-Canadian standard based on those international principles.

And lastly, I think there should be opportunities where the federal government and provincial governments could collaborate to bring together these people who are evaluating credentials, whether they're doing this through the provincial services or the regulated professions, to discuss and share research, to share outcomes, and to be able to develop better mechanisms for portability of those credentials.

That is all I have to say. Thank you.

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

Ms. Fung.

**Ms. Gloria Fung (Vice-President, Canada-Hong Kong Link):** Good afternoon. I am Gloria Fung. I am the vice-president of Canada-Hong Kong Link, and with me is Norman Beach, who is a member of our immigration committee. He is also an ESL instructor, teaching immigrants and refugees.

First of all, I would like to thank the standing committee for this opportunity to present our position paper with respect to the recognition of international experience and credentials.

Canada-Hong Kong Link is a non-profit, community-based organization established in 1996 to foster community spirit in Chinese Canadians through participation in all aspects of Canadian society. We are actively involved in immigration, refugee, and settlement services policies through many different types of activities. We have also previously participated in consultations by the standing committee.

Today we are going to focus on recognition of international experience and credentials. The lack of recognition for international experience and credentials has long been regarded as the major barrier to the full and meaningful contribution of immigrants to Canada. Many skilled workers, upon their arrival here, find that the licensing requirements here preclude them from being accredited. They either become unemployed for a long time or they are obliged to take up very low-paying, unskilled work that does not reflect their international experience and credentials.

Quite often this leads to economic hardship as well as mental health issues. In recent years there has been a huge exodus of immigrants, particularly in the Chinese Canadian community, where the exodus rate is as high as 20%, as compared to the average rate of 4% to 6%. Many of them are disillusioned with their prospects in Canada.

Since immigration is vital to all future growth of Canada, we feel that the federal government should take a more proactive and holistic approach toward its immigration and settlement policies in order to retain the talent pool of immigrants who have been attracted to our country.

We have the following eight recommendations.

Number one, CIC should set up a coordinating office to facilitate the accreditation and assessment of international credentials of skilled worker applicants, even before they come to Canada. A universal set of standards, criteria, and procedures should be developed to streamline the process of assessment.

Number two, to assist the prospective immigrants or newcomers in meeting the Canadian licensing requirements, Canadian colleges, universities, and vocational schools can provide correspondence courses on the Internet to help foreign-trained professionals to acquire professional certificates even before they come here.

Number three, information on Canadian labour markets, professional licensing requirements, and professional accreditation processes in various provinces should be made available to prospective immigrants through an Internet portal to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their relocation. This database should be updated regularly, with input from professional associations, trade bodies, NGOs, as well as provincial governments.

Number four, CIC should constantly review its immigration policy, particularly the point system for skilled workers, in order to ensure that it meets the changing requirements of our labour market and economy.

Number five, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments should partner with private and voluntary sectors to remove barriers to the recognition of international experience and credentials to reduce the brain drain. The government should engage the various stakeholders in strategic planning, information sharing, monitoring of issues, and also legislation pertaining to international credential recognition.

Number six, an education campaign promoting the contribution of international experience in a global economy, as well as diversity, inclusiveness, and equality in the workplace are vital to the success of the goal of acceptance of foreign-trained professionals.

• (1700)

Number seven, varying levels of government should provide incentives such as tax credits, internship programs, or wage subsidies to employers who are willing to hire foreign-trained professionals.

Last but not least, financial assistance should be offered to newcomers seeking bridging programs or skills training in Canada.

Next, I would like to ask Norman Beach to present our concerns regarding the settlement services.

**Mr. Norman Beach (Immigration Committee Member, Canada-Hong Kong Link):** Thank you very much, Gloria.

Thank you for this opportunity.

I'm going to focus on the language aspect of using skills that immigrants bring here. Hong Zhu and Shuyang Wang both mentioned the great importance of bridging programs by allowing immigrants to use their skills to pass licensing exams and to develop soft skills in an unfamiliar labour market.

I'd also like to point out that StatsCan examined the ideas from several thousand immigrants on the difficulties they experience when pursuing further education or training, which is essential to productivity and the labour market. They found that language problems were the biggest problem mentioned, even ahead of financial difficulties.

Now, of course, these go together, because it is so important to have language training in many cases so that they can have good jobs and contribute to the country.

In one particular case, enhanced language training, the federal government has gotten involved. It was a good step forward, but there is a huge problem relating to the fact that it's a cost-shared program. It becomes a problem for agencies that have expertise in developing programs. They do not have the money to get involved. Originally, CIC felt that they would stretch the federal dollars by cost sharing, but what has happened is that service providers and provincial governments find it very difficult to step up to the plate, and that has created a problem. Certainly in Ontario it's a huge problem, with Ontario very underrepresented in these projects.

As we know, Ontario immigrants are funded at the lowest per capita rate, and when you figure out the funding and you compare it with the landing fee, they are basically paying for their settlement services out of their own pockets. In that case, I don't think a cost-shared program is the best way to go, and I think it should be fully

federally funded...as well as the fact that Ontario immigrants should get their fair share of funding.

The other aspect is this. When we look at advanced language training for skilled workers, that's very important, but there are a very large number of people who come to this country who are not ready for advanced language training at the moment they arrive. They may be skilled professionals. They may have come in as spouses. They may have come in as refugee claimants.

Refugee claimants are not eligible in 9 out of 10 provinces for federally funded services. Therefore, we would recommend that refugee claimants become eligible for all language training that's federally funded. Immigrants who have to get survival jobs when they first arrive and cannot start language training become ineligible for language training after they have been here for some time. They are no longer newcomers. They can't attend language instruction for newcomers to Canada. We think this is a tremendous waste. They should also be eligible. Naturalized citizens should be eligible.

We know your committee has supported these issues. We want to get behind it, and we hope it can happen.

Finally, wait lists have become a serious problem in Canada, and that applies to the eligible people. They still have to wait, because of flatlined funding, for nearly 10 years, outside of Quebec. Will the new budget deal with it? In our opinion, no. The \$20 million across Canada in year one is insufficient to deal with the fact that the settlement service sector is reeling after nearly 10 years of flatlined funding. The immigrant numbers are also rising. Last year 15,000 more people arrived. If you do the math, on a \$1,500 average, all of this extra money will be sucked up by the new arrivals in terms of services, so I don't know how the people who are on the wait list are going to be dealt with.

The committee recommended two years ago that there should be a per capita benchmark at \$3,000 to deal with immigrant funding, instead of the situation where 9 out of 10 provinces basically have a ceiling and have to divvy up their remainder. We would like to see that. We would like to propose that this be really worked on.

• (1705)

Furthermore, at the present funding level, even with the five-year plan, in five years, if the present immigrant levels continue, the per capita funding outside of Quebec will only be about half of the benchmark you have been proposing.

We are glad to see an increase. We just feel the increase is insufficient, and furthermore the money is needed now, not in five years.

I would like to thank you for your time.

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

We go to Ms. McIsaac.

**Ms. Elizabeth McIsaac (Project Manager, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members.

Thank you for your patience and attention. I believe I am the last in a long line of witnesses today.

I am with the Maytree Foundation. We're a private foundation based here in Toronto, and in September of 2003 we launched an initiative called the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council in conjunction with the Toronto City Summit Alliance.

TRIEC, as we call it, was an effort to bring together all the different stakeholders that are related to this issue. It includes employers, labour, occupational regulatory bodies, colleges, universities, community organizations, immigrant professionals themselves, as well as three orders of government—federal, provincial, and municipal governments.

Our focus has been primarily on skilled immigrants and finding more effective local solutions to integrate them into the local economy. My comments today will focus on some of these solutions and some of our lessons learned to date.

We have three core objectives in TRIEC. The first is to increase access to relevant and value-added services that support the labour market integration of skilled immigrants. Our work in this area to date has focused on internship and mentoring programs. You have already heard today from Career Bridge, so I am not going to elaborate there, except to say that this is a good news story; we've had good results from Career Bridge.

However, as we have heard from Mr. Wang, it is not big enough. We need to expand it. We need to be able to provide more internships. One hundred and fifty internships in 12 months in a city that receives over 100,000 immigrants is not even a drop in the bucket. These types of programs have to have greater resources and capacity to deliver more, so that more people can benefit from an 85% employment rate at the end of the program.

TRIEC has also launched a mentoring program initiative that links skilled immigrants with their employed counterparts along occupation-specific lines, offering skilled immigrants the social capital and networks that are a necessary part of any job search. In these initiatives we are working not only with government as partners but also with community organizations, educational institutions, and, most importantly, employers. The key success is our close partnership with employers.

Another key area of services for immigrants is language, as we've just heard. Many immigrants have the technical skills necessary to practise their occupation, but they lack the occupation-specific terminology and communication skills that are needed to succeed in the labour market.

Future investments in language training must include a meaningful focus on workplace communication skills. Current language training funded by the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada provides basic language skills and is not oriented to higher levels for labour market participation. Employers have told us—and I think the value TRIEC brings to the table is that we have a very strong and clear employer voice—is that LINC level five is not enough. We need to expand access to the enhanced language training dollars that Mr. Beach just referred to. We have a couple of recommendations in this regard.

First, we believe that the federal government, in conjunction with the provincial government, should expand successful labour market integration programs such as internships, mentoring, and other

bridging programs, and clearly should work closely with employers and other partners to do this.

Second, the federal government should update and expand language training and assessment programs in order to meet the needs of industry and the new profile of skilled immigrants.

Our second objective at TRIEC is to change the way that stakeholders value and work with skilled immigrants. In this regard we are focusing primarily on employers—key partners in any solutions on this issue—and we've heard this already from a number of people today. Employers generally have not been involved in a systematic or meaningful way on this issue. And if I take a quick look at who has presented to you today, I don't see a lot of employers at the table, and this is important. They are not engaged. We need to encourage them to participate in work experience programs and to begin to change the way they are looking at skilled immigrants as a potential talent pool.

On the matter of engaging employers on the issue of immigrant labour market integration, we recommend that the federal government provide incentives to employers, employer associations, and labour to become more active in the integration of skilled immigrants. I think this is vitally important. As one of the country's largest employers, the Government of Canada needs to be a leader on this issue and participate directly in internship and mentoring opportunities for immigrants. The Public Service Commission is not effectively engaged in this. To date we have had one internship through Canadian Heritage. That's it—no mentors. So I think this is an important thing that we hope you can champion for us.

• (1710)

Finally, TRIEC's third objective is to change the way governments relate to one another in the planning and programming around this issue. When we sat down to plan TRIEC we began with an analysis of the problem at hand. We saw a system with a large number of stakeholders working in isolation from one another in silos and significantly removed from where immigrants live and work—cities. There is a lack of coordination on this issue, both vertically and horizontally.

TRIEC has started to work on immigrant labour market integration in a new way as a matter of local coordination. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has supported this initiative, and from our experiences to date we believe that the federal government should continue to support local coordination in other cities and enable them to identify their own solutions. In fact, this should be a core component of any future regionalization strategy. It's already happening. There's local coordination that has begun to build its own capacity in places like Waterloo, Ottawa, Vancouver, and Halifax, but they need support. It costs, and it takes capacity to do this type of coordination to identify local solutions.

We've made this recommendation also to the Prime Minister's task force on cities and communities. We're not saying it should be a TRIEC model in every city. We believe that each community needs to identify what their needs are, and they need to have support to be able to build their capacity to deliver on finding those solutions.

We know that cities have not historically been at the immigration planning tables, even though the vast majority of immigrants settle in cities. As well, there is little horizontal collaboration between departments at any single level of government.

Solutions in this context include our recommendation today for the federal government to first support the local coordination of stakeholders to integrate immigrant skills, and second, with reference to the province of Ontario, to pursue an immigration settlement agreement that explicitly includes reference to labour market integration.

To conclude, we know that immigrants make important contributions to our economy, culture, and civic life. They establish businesses, create jobs, stimulate the economy by increasing demand for consumer products, and fill labour market needs. But six out of ten immigrants coming to Canada have made a downwardly mobile shift into careers other than the one they were trained for, and we are clearly not leveraging the real potential of immigration when this happens.

We urge the standing committee to champion this effort so that all Canadians gain maximum benefits from the skills and experience of our newest citizens.

Thank you.

• (1715)

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

We're going to go into our five-minute rounds, and we'll start with Ms. Grewal.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all for being here. Thank you for your time and your presentations.

My question is very simple. You know in Canada there is a shortage of skilled workers. When people come here on the point system, they are skilled. Their degrees are recognized in their homelands. But when they come here, their degrees are not recognized. They have to do all sorts of small jobs, working at gas stations and driving taxis.

So what needs to be done? Could you just tell us in a few lines what should be done?

**Mr. Timothy Owen:** Well, I think one of the common threads I've been hearing is that employers have to be engaged more in this process. Maybe we need a public awareness campaign that federal, provincial, and local governments can cooperate on—all have a stake in this. There are already many solutions, many programs that can assist people in using their skills and having their skills recognized, but unless employers are aware of them, recognize them, and value them, they're not going to make the final decision of hiring, which is where the big decision really lies.

**Ms. Elizabeth McIsaac:** I agree. I would add that I think 100% there needs to be more focus placed on employers. We've spent a lot of time in the last couple of decades trying to fix the immigrant, and I think now we need to fix the employers a little bit, build their capacity to better recognize, better recruit, retain, and promote immigrants in their workplace. But I think that takes quite a bit of effort, and it requires some partnership among different levels of government to make it happen. Working with the private sector is

difficult. We've put a lot of our effort into that. We're launching a website called [hireimmigrants.ca](http://hireimmigrants.ca), which is being funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It's a bilingual site that will be ready June 21.

But from that needs to be a real strategic outreach and engagement of employers to help them to do it. We work a lot with employers around the table at TRIEC, and what they keep saying to us is, "Help us make it a bit easier. We will do it. We know we need them." We have Manulife Financial championing and chairing our council. They're there because they know we need to be competitive. We need skilled immigrants for Canada to be globally competitive. They need skilled immigrants because of the impending skills and labour shortages. They know they need to get better at it.

But that's a big company with a lot of capacity. The new jobs are with the small and medium-sized enterprises. They don't have the capacity. They need help, whether it's through tax incentives and targeted wage subsidies and that type of thing, or through other ways of building their capacity to look at these skills differently so that they stop looking at international experience as a liability and a deficit and start seeing it as an asset that's going to help make them more competitive.

But that requires a full mind shift, and it takes a lot of work and education.

**Ms. Gloria Fung:** Actually, I would like to echo the other two speakers on that aspect.

I think this problem needs to be tackled from both sides. First of all, we need to give immigrants a very realistic picture of the labour market so that they won't have an overly rosy picture of the Canadian labour market before they come here. I think this has much to do with the lack of information being provided to them prior to the submission of their application. That's why Canada-Hong Kong Link has proposed very concrete recommendations on how to tackle this problem, meaning the creation of a database with input from various levels of government and also professional trades and associations.

At the same time, we need to expedite the entire process of accreditation, because presently we have a lot of unnecessary barriers being created by various professional trades and associations. I think we need to take a very realistic approach towards that. The three levels of government need to work hand in hand to remove all these barriers.

On the other side, we also need to change the concept, the perception of employers in Canada.

I still remember when I first arrived in Canada 15 years ago. I had acquired a lot of international experience. I was in charge of all the China-World Bank projects, as well as European self-loan projects, but I couldn't get a job as a marketing rep in most Canadian companies, because the very first question they asked me was, "Do you have Canadian experience?"

I was surprised to find that I was asked such a question, because with the globalization of our economy, international experience is considered an asset. It's so vital to our future success in international competition. So we need to change the perception of most Canadian employers. That's why I think a campaign needs to be launched by the three levels of government to tell employers how important it is to use this kind of international experience being brought by immigrants into our workplace and also to make Canadian firms more competitive when we compete with other countries.

At the same time, it is equally important to introduce the concepts of inclusiveness, diversity, and equality in our workplace. As pointed out by Elizabeth just now, the government should take the lead in starting this campaign. I have yet to see equality being implemented in the public service sector. I think the government should take the lead, and you should set a good example for the rest of the private sector.

• (1720)

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

Now we will go to Monsieur Roger Clavet.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All day, we have heard evidence and specifics about how to improve the system. That's the way it has been since the beginning of these hearings.

If you don't mind, this time I'd like to push aside the bureaucratic aspect. One piece of evidence that I read and heard probably represents many immigrants. I'm talking about Magdalena Szmygin. I'd like to spend my five minutes going over this person's experience and understanding everyone.

Immigrants walk a path of survival every day. This woman is Polish, a journalist and a lawyer. Had she been born here, books would have been written about her. Her life would be made into a film or TV series. Money would be made. She defended freedom of the press, she was a union representative during the Solidarnosc strike in Poland, a movement that was forced underground. She went into exile and bought an illegal newspaper in Greece to help her community. She persevered.

Lacking recognition in Canada, she has been doing odd jobs for 13 years — each one as thankless as the last — packer in a health food store, nanny, etc. She is a lawyer! She persevered, she went back to school, instead of wallowing in self-pity. What courage. So she studied design, business administration and advertising. She was required to repay her student loan. Something in the system is not working right.

She was told to keep quiet about her involvement. She was hired, but she was not to say that she was working for or active in Amnesty International. She was to say that she played golf, sang, had hobbies, dance and music, but no political involvement.

Meanwhile, she founded a self-help group, the RUBICON Help Centre, to get recognition for international qualifications: not her own, other people's qualifications. She proposed a national campaign.

I think that this is the example of the struggle of all immigrants. For a country to push aside people of this calibre is scandalous. This

woman said earlier that had she been advised by a mentor instead of an immigration consultant, she would have been a lawyer.

Madam, allow me to say to you that you are the best advocate for the cause of silent immigrants, who say nothing and do many different and thankless odd jobs. In conclusion, I'd like to say that yes, you have to be flexible — and you have been — but you must never forget your past.

Where do you find the strength to go on?

• (1725)

[*English*]

**Ms. Magdalena Szmygin:** Thank you very much for your recognition of my credentials and my skills.

I just would like to add that I agree with everybody who said that the most important thing is to change the perception of reality, not reality. The reality is quite good here. We have good programs here in Canada. We are trying. Our meeting here is proof that we are trying to improve our programs even more with so very many representatives of great organizations, non-profit, charitable, and governmental, working to help all newcomers in finding good jobs here in Canada and finding good lives.

I appreciate this very much, and I think it may be even enough if the employers—I agree with you—had a different attitude. So whatever we're going to do on this front, we're going to do with employers.

This is right, and thank you very much for stressing this. I would like only to say that the problem is more important and more tough than most of us maybe realize, because it was a true story of only one of several bad situations, but I believe it was a very good example.

I got this advice from a professional and very good legal agency, the Kent legal agency. They told me my résumé would look much better if I cut out everything I did before coming here.

And because someone had already told me earlier that—and I realized after I applied for several jobs that I thought I had qualifications for and got refusals...I realized I had to work from my Canadian credentials. I studied journalism, management, regulatory law administration, design, advertising—a two-year program of advertising, just to learn that it was not enough because I'm too old to be an art director in advertising agency.

So I went back to my old profession. I went to the Kent legal agency, and they said, "Cut out that you were a lawyer and have a master's degree; just don't mention it, because it would be better if you didn't mention this". So I did not.

Because I was then a member of Amnesty International, and I'm still a member of B'nai Brith Canada, because I am interested in holocaust issues, I cooperated with them. They said, "You should not mention these hobbies and interests. Your hobbies are jogging and watching movies; it's more human." They gave me this advice, and I followed this advice. But I don't blame those people. They were quite nice women, and they just wanted to help me, knowing what the situation is in those...because they were cooperating with employers.



They even sent me once, just to prove how it works, to an IT office looking for a legal worker. They said, "Okay, this time please reveal everything. You were a lawyer in Poland." And this director, the manager of this company, had a very long and very nice, in my opinion, interview with me, but finally he said, "You know, we have a lawyer here." I answered, "I'm not applying for a position of legal counsel", but he said, "Because you were a lawyer in Poland, she may feel threatened and not very comfortable."

• (1730)

He didn't say, "No, I am not going to employ you". On the other hand, because I revealed my other interest in Amnesty International, he said, "Okay, you are still working for the community very much. Will you have time to work for me at all?" I told him it's not important to me to work...to earn money, of course. But he said, no, he wasn't very much convinced. This was the moment I started to feel I am not going to go through this interview—

**Mr. Roger Clavet:** Madame, you are a real survivor, and you have all my admiration.

**Ms. Magdalena Szmygin:** Thank you very much. I was going to tell you that it is a more serious problem than we mentioned.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Siksay.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for your presentations.

I can't imagine—well, I can imagine going into a job interview and having to pretend not to be yourself. There was a time when I had to do that, and I am glad that time is no longer here for some of us, but still people are forced into that position. It's a horrible place to be, and I look forward to the day when that isn't the case.

When I was hearing your story, Mr. Wang, it reminded me of some testimony we had in Calgary from a retired engineering professor, who talked about the situation of people who work in call centres in India—engineers in call centres—who answer phone calls from engineers in Canada about the technical work they are doing or the technical programs they are using in their work. But when these same people come to Canada, we won't employ them because they don't have the Canadian experience or the qualifications for our workplace. Yet when we get into trouble, they're the ones we turn to. The ironies of that have not been lost on me as we go across the country.

I want to say to Mr. Wang and Ms. Szmygin, I really appreciate that you shared so personally. I know that is not easy to do in a situation like this, and thank you very much for doing that.

I wanted to ask Mr. Owen this. We have heard a lot as we have been going across the country about the evaluation of credentials, and you are the first person who actually does that work who has been sitting here in some way. I wonder if you could take us through the process.

When somebody walks in and says they need their credentials evaluated, can you just tell us about the steps your organization would go through in that process, so that we have some sense of how that goes?

**Mr. Timothy Owen:** Sure, I'd be happy to.

The first step we take, of course, is to examine the documents to ensure that they are authentic, and in many cases this means either we've received something directly from the institution that issued them or we verify directly by writing or e-mailing or something. We won't begin an evaluation if we are not comfortable with the authenticity.

We would look at the institution to see the status of that institution in its home country, to see how it relates to similar status institutions here, and we would position the credential in its home country first to see the level, scope, and intent—I guess we would call it. Those are the three things we look at. What are the admission requirements to get into the program? Where does it lie in relation to other degrees within the system of education in that country? What is the depth in which studies have to be taken in that degree program? What is the scope and intensity of the studies? What is the purpose of it? What does it lead to? Is this a terminal degree with which you can't go any further in the academic stream? Is it a vocational degree that leads to a professional licence? Is it a professional degree?

We look at those factors to determine what type of degree it is and then we map those factors onto the most equivalent degree here in Canada. So we would determine whether it is a college degree, a vocational degree, a university degree, and at what level, based on those factors.

That's in very brief terms what we would do.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Do you get many requests from folks who are outside of Canada just starting the process at this point?

**Mr. Timothy Owen:** In the last quarter, about 10% of our applications came from outside of Canada. We think it should probably be three or four times that, for all the reasons we have heard here. People should have a better idea of what their credentials will be worth prior to coming to Canada, and I think the capacity with online services is there to do that. It is a question of promoting that overseas.

• (1735)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** In my constituency there is a very large immigrant population and a large immigrant population from the People's Republic of China now, and also in the past from Hong Kong and Taiwan in terms of Chinese-speaking immigration. I find that the folks who come as skilled immigrants are often very isolated from the community. They come and their connections are with their own family unit that immigrated with them, and often they don't have connections with other families. They don't have connections to community organizations and they don't have the experience of having had to make those kinds of connections in their country of origin either, because they were functioning fairly well in that circumstance.

I am wondering what kind of assistance they would get upon arriving in Canada and making connections to those organizations. It seems in my riding that the only way that starts happening for them is if their children go to school. It's often through the school contacts that they start making those connections to other groups or organizations that might help them with their integration.

Maybe Ms. Szmygin or Mr. Wang have some sense of that, or some of the others of you who work with folks who are just arriving. It's specifically on skilled workers and the kinds of connections they would make for assistance in settlement.

**Ms. Gloria Fung:** I would like to try to answer this question.

Basically I think it is hard for skilled workers to outreach into so-called mainstream society. Because they are not accepted in the workplace by most companies, they are obliged to find a job within their little ethnic economy. That is the experience of many, many Chinese Canadian immigrants. It's not because they like to work there, but rather because they cannot find a job outside their ethnic economy. So I think this is a very serious problem, and it really confines them to very limited Canadian experience as such.

I think there is also another factor that leads to such phenomenon. I think it's the language skills.

As pointed out by Norman a while ago, when we talk about integration, when we talk about settlement of immigrants in Canada, it's very vital for the three levels of government to provide necessary integration and settlement services to them in a timely manner, because if they do not receive the necessary services during the first one or two years, they will end up with the wrong job, and there is no return at all. This is the case with a lot of very highly educated, skilled workers. Once a professor has ended up as a waitress in a restaurant, how can she gain the confidence of her future employer in university? That's a very realistic problem they all have to face, and that is why time is of the essence.

When we talk about recognition of international credentials and experience, we cannot forget the importance of sufficient support, particularly funding and resources, to make integration and settlement happen. That's why it's also very important for the federal government to allocate sufficient funding throughout the next five years.

In the 2005 budget, I'm really disappointed to see that there is only \$20 million allocated for the first year, \$30 million for the second year, and \$50 million for the third year. It is seriously back-ended. I am not even sure if the government is going to last longer than one or two years, so is that budget going to be sustained? It's a very realistic question that we all have in mind. So I hope very much that this \$298 million is going to stay with the settlement services, that it's not going to be eliminated with any possible change of government. At the same time, it should be equally allocated throughout the five years instead of being back-ended.

Thank you.

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

We are going to move on to Mr. Temelkovski.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for presenting.

I would just like to ask two questions.

Mr. Owen, after you've assessed them or you've translated.... Is it a translation service?

• (1740)

**Mr. Timothy Owen:** No, we ask that the key documents be translated into French or English, as well as giving us the original language conversion.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Okay, and do they assume at that time that they are now engineers in Canada because they have a piece of paper in English?

**Mr. Timothy Owen:** No. At least we take great pains to ensure that people know that the decision for admission to a profession or to a university is a decision of that body and that our report is a tool those bodies may use in determining that. I think we make that as clear as possible.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** It's very important. If your organization would do that, it would be great. That's where the link continues to the next body.

My other comment was in terms of what Roger said to Magdalena about where she finds her strength.

I came to Canada when I was 13 years old. I didn't speak a word of English—and I still have difficulty sometimes. I spoke only Macedonian.

I'll tell you about my mother. She came to night school with me. I went to regular school and night school to learn English, and she came to night school to learn how to say “fork” and “knife” and “shopping” and “hat” and “dress”—things she needed around the house. But she could only print; she couldn't write. So the teacher was printing on the blackboard for her, and after she realized she was holding the class back, she said she wasn't going to do that any more because she was holding ten other students back.

So this energy that I think all of you bring comes from facing all the challenges, everyday challenges—learning a language, finding out about having a telephone, how to use a telephone, or a shower sometimes.

I laugh in my office. I used to be asked how to spell this word or that word in my previous work, and I would just joke with them. I said, “Why would you ask me?” I said “I come from such a small part of the world, a little village in some corner of the world, where I had never seen running water—cold, never mind hot. We had a bicycle for the whole village”—yada, yada, yada. I'd say, “Now, you're asking me? I have an office here. I have staff. I have everything, and you are asking me?”

So the strength comes from the hardships. I tell you, if my mother had had money, if we had had money with my father, they would have returned to Macedonia.

It's difficult, absolutely, but after some time you do learn to manage, and after some time you do learn to integrate a little bit more. After some time you do learn to get above your neighbour, and after some time they'll ask you, “How come all you immigrants have homes?” They used to ask us that because we owned our own home. We bought our own home.

I guess 20, 40 years ago there would have been a lot more like Bill and Roger around the table, people born in this country, but now things have changed. I was born outside the country; Nina was born outside the country; Andrew was born outside the country. I think many of you were, and those in the audience as well.

I think the decisions we come up with in legislation nowadays are much different from the decisions our fathers and grandfathers came up with. They're much different because of the strength that each and every one of us brings as a new Canadian into Canada. This is my country. I married a non-Macedonian, and I learned to speak Italian, because she's Italian. She learned to speak Macedonian. Our kids speak English, with regret. We want them to know many languages, but that's Canada.

The fight continues, and we keep working. The strength comes from not having a PhD recognized immediately, not having an IT job immediately.

• (1745)

But I think it's a price we pay. Hopefully the same generation will bear fruit, but for sure the next one will.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I have just a commentary on your comment. I guess things have changed somewhat. You know, it's one thing if you come to the country as a refugee, if you're fleeing some circumstance. You take it in stride. You're not happy about it, but you want safety.

But we have a lot of folks now who are coming under the impression that their degrees are going to be recognized. When my father came he had two degrees, architecture and town planning. If he had come as an economic migrant he would have been pretty

upset, but since he came as a refugee, well, it was a different matter. Plus, the government was pretty nice to the Hungarian refugees. It started a wave, which has continued, actually. It was a big test for the country.

We're very pleased to have had the opportunity to have this discussion. You probably saw some baggage moving. We're like a rock band; we're on the road. But we don't play any music.

We have people behind us, who are the translators, and that's because we have a bilingual country, and anybody who comes to the committee has a right to present in French, in one of the official languages. We have our clerks and our researcher. We even have a person from the ministry who is keeping an eye on what our committee is doing and is conveying the message up to Ottawa.

Generally, we've been hearing some pretty consistent messages. I tend to think there won't be an election just now; it probably will be a while longer. You know, it's one of those things that the media like to pick up on and run with, and they talk to each other. Anyway, I don't think it will happen anytime too soon. I want to get a number of things fixed, particularly the Citizenship Act. I think every Canadian, whether you're born here or born elsewhere, should have the right to the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If you were to go to my website and check out the stuff on citizenship, you'd probably find there's much more there than you want to read. You'd probably get excited, too, and join the battle.

I want to thank you very much. I'd like to have a group picture, because you guys are the last group we've done this with in Toronto. Next week we're travelling, and after that we're travelling some more, so we'll have seen the whole country in about three and a half weeks.

Thank you very much. The meeting will adjourn.

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