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Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. This is the Standing Committee...

Could we come to order?

You know, Mr. Kennedy, you asked me if you could sit here. You can sit here, and you can participate, but when I say “order,” that means that we have to stop talking, okay?

Thank you very much.

This is the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, meeting 41. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are here to study the immigration settlement and adaptation program.

We have four witnesses this morning from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to help us with this subject. We have Dawn Edlund, associate assistant deputy minister of operations; Catrina Tapley, associate assistant deputy minister of strategic and program policy; Deborah Tunis, director general of integration; and Wally Boxhill, director of integration and resettlement program delivery.

Ladies, Mr. Boxhill, good morning to you. If you could give us a presentation of up to seven minutes, I know that members of the committee will then have some questions of you.

Ms. Edlund, the floor is yours. Thank you.

Ms. Dawn Edlund (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, my colleague Ms. Tapley will deliver the opening remarks.

Ms. Catrina Tapley (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): And I will try to be as quick as I can, Mr. Chairman.

[Translation]

As you said, my name is Catrina Tapley. I am the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic and Program Policy at Citizenship and Immigration Canada. With me today is Dawn Edlund, the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Operations at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Deborah Tunis, the Director General of Integration, and Wally Boxhill, the Director of Integration and Resettlement Program Delivery.

[English]

We're pleased to be here today to discuss settlement funding. Settlement funds are used for programs and services that help address newcomers' immediate settlement needs, that support their integration into Canadian society. These include language training, information and referrals, help finding employment that matches a newcomer's skills and education, and help establishing networks and contacts in their communities.

Our funding decisions are based on meeting immigrants' needs, responsible spending, and fairness. It's important to remember that since 2006 the government has more than tripled funding for settlement services across Canada. As the committee is aware, for 2011-12 the government made a decision to reduce settlement funding by about \$53 million from the national allocations outside Quebec. Despite these reductions outside Quebec, the settlement sector remains well funded. The total funding envelope for 2011-12 is over \$600 million. In Ontario alone, funding has increased from \$111 million in 2005-06 to \$346.5 million in 2011-12. As a result of this federal spending, there has been a tremendous expansion in the availability and range of settlement services in Ontario, as well as in Toronto.

Mr. Chair, CIC funds services for newcomers where there are demonstrated needs. The level of settlement funding allocation is based on where immigrants land, and reflects changes in immigrant settlement patterns. CIC strives to ensure that funding is allocated fairly to the provinces and territories where immigrants settle. After all, it is only fair and reasonable that newcomers have access to settlement services where they live.

Three provinces will see a reduction in settlement funding for this year, with the bulk of reductions being felt in Ontario. This is because we are moving to include Ontario in the national formula for settlement funding for the first time. This is an opportunity to move toward the principle of national fairness in funding.

● (0855)

[Translation]

In the past five years, Ontario has received 63% of the funding, even though it received only 55% of the immigrants arriving in Canada outside Quebec. If the situation were to remain the same, Ontario would have received \$1,000 more per immigrant than the provinces and territories outside Quebec. For that reason, starting with this fiscal year, we are going to include Ontario in the per-immigrant formula that already applies to other provinces and territories outside Quebec.

[English]

In recent years, immigrant settlement patterns have shifted. While Ontario's share of immigrant intake has declined, other provinces have seen an increase in their share of immigrant intake. As a result, some provinces—namely, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan—will have an increase in their settlement funding allocations.

We've also seen a shift in settlement patterns within provinces. For example, over the last five years, the number of immigrants arriving in Toronto has decreased by 30%. Immigrants arriving in Ontario are settling in smaller communities such as the York region. To reflect these changes, CIC is also shifting where it funds settlement services intra-provincially to better serve immigrants.

This means expanding services in regions where newcomers are settling, such as the 905 region in the greater Toronto area. For example, the York region has benefited from a tenfold increase since 2005-06. Between the current fiscal year and 2011-12, the coming fiscal year, there will be an increase of 43%. This is because statistics show that there has been an increasing number of newcomers settling in York. This also means that funding will be adjusted for services within the City of Toronto to reflect declining landings.

Given this shift in where newcomers are settling, realigning funding across the country is the responsible thing to do, and it will allow us to achieve fairness across Canada. In recent years, CIC has moved towards using a call for proposals process for funding decisions of this nature.

Last spring, CIC issued a call for proposals process across Ontario to establish settlement service delivery for the 2011-12 fiscal year under the framework of our new approach to the delivery of our settlement program. What this means is that any settlement service provider organization in Ontario had the opportunity to submit proposals. This is a merit-based, competitive process, and all proposals were assessed in a fair and consistent manner.

[Translation]

CIC employees organized information and dissemination sessions for service providers. These sessions covered both the new method of implementing our settlement program and the call for proposals process. The topic was also explained in detail on the settlement website, where the process was explained, and the deadline for submitting applications was given, as were the eligibility criteria and the activity components that could be funded.

[English]

In evaluating the proposals received, our criteria included whether an organization demonstrated that it addresses service needs and

programming priorities, that it has strong governance and financial management practices, and that it offers value for money. In addition, we took into account an organization's capacity to meet the terms of the contribution agreement, including appropriate financial accountability.

Funding proposals were approved only after a thorough analysis to ensure the best value for our dollar could be obtained. In early December 2010, the department communicated with all organizations that submitted proposals to provide them with formal notice of whether their proposal was successful or not.

For organizations that we are currently funding but were unsuccessful in the call for proposals process, we provided them with about four months' notice that CIC's funding would come to a conclusion on March 31, 2011. This provided them with time to work with CIC in order to wind down their operations.

Eighty per cent of organizations that are currently funded in Ontario will have a new agreement in place so they can continue to provide services in 2011-12. Regrettably, for a small percentage of organizations, the department will not be providing settlement funding for the upcoming fiscal year.

The call for proposals is a merit-based process, and while some organizations may have received funding from CIC over a significant period of time, this does not mean that new funding is automatically granted and will continue indefinitely. This is a message that departmental officials have been sending to the settlement sector for over two years.

● (0900)

[Translation]

This means that, through the call for proposals process, and as of April 2011, new agencies will offer settlement services funded by CIC, while agencies that have been providing services for years will no longer receive funding.

[English]

To minimize transition burdens on service provider organizations and newcomers, CIC has worked and will continue to work closely with the organizations that were unsuccessful in the call for proposals process. Our goal is to ensure that services are wound down in an appropriate fashion and that the impact on newcomers' needs is minimized.

As for the organizations that were successful, CIC is currently negotiating contribution agreements. These organizations submitted strong proposals that address service needs and programming priorities, have strong governance and financial management practices, and demonstrate value for money.

In negotiating and managing all contribution agreements, CIC will continue to ensure that public funding is spent appropriately and efficiently, that there is value for the money we spend, that there are strong accountability and performance oversight in place, and that we deliver high-quality services to newcomers efficiently.

[Translation]

We are now open to answering all the questions of the honourable members of the committee.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Tapley, for your presentation.

Mr. Oliphant has some questions for you.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you all for coming here this morning and for working so hard to ensure that the programs newcomers are given actually help make a difference.

I have a couple of questions for you. When the minister presented the estimates for the numbers of newcomers coming to Canada, we saw that it was not decreasing. In fact, with much fanfare, he said that we are maintaining the highest immigration levels in Canadian history. Is that true?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Yes, that is true. I wouldn't say we are at the highest level in Canadian history, but it's high compared with recent years.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Last year over this year, it's about the same level?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: It's close to the same, and soon we'll be able to release figures for next year as well.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Are the needs of the newcomers different? Are we having newcomers coming to Canada, say, from the United States, Great Britain, or France, who would have fewer needs than people from countries more significantly different, with languages different from ours, or are they the same as in previous years?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I think it depends on the different categories of newcomers coming to Canada. Needs for refugees are higher than for those who are coming under the economic class, for example, or refugees as compared to, in some cases, provincial nominees, or the business class—

Mr. Robert Oliphant: But the needs would generally not have decreased in the last couple of years?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: No, I would say that needs have not decreased.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: In my experience, they've increased, at least in the area I live in. The refugees may have very high needs, yet the global budget has been cut by \$53 million. The minister is spending a lot of time, as is the media...that Ontario has taken a large hit, which is true, but the whole program has dropped \$53 million.

Am I correct on that?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: You are correct.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: So there is new funding for three provinces, but for the rest of the country it's down, so that the global budget is down by \$53 million.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: The global budget is down by \$53 million, and then how we allocate resources outside Quebec depends on the national funding formula. That funding formula is derived by a couple of things, but one is the level of immigrants landing in particular provinces. We use a three-year sliding scale. I think this year we used 2007, 2008, and 2009. So it's an average of those three years. Refugees count for a higher percentage under the formula, because they have special needs.

● (0905)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Does the department keep statistics on where people go after they've landed—within the first three months, six months, 12 months, 20 months, three years? Anecdotally, we're experiencing that people who have settled in certain provinces end up gravitating to the major cities, because that's where they may have friends, even though they originally landed in a different province.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We do keep those statistics, as a matter of fact. In fact, we have recently published a study on the interprovincial mobility of immigrants in Canada. We looked at immigrants who landed from 2000 to 2006, based on the 2006 tax year. What we found was that immigrants move from some provinces more than others. Ontario retains a large number of immigrants. About 91% of the immigrants who come to Ontario stay in Ontario. The Atlantic provinces have a much lower retention rate. There are differences based on whether immigrants are family class or business investors. In addition, we found an east-west shift. So the net beneficiaries of that migration are actually Alberta and British Columbia. Those were the provinces that had a net increase overall.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: In this, much is done about landing, which is concerning me, and not much has been said about settling, which is a little different from landing. Settling I think takes a long time.

The other thing is the issue of Ontario and proportionality. The Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has said that when Quebec is factored into the whole, Ontario is actually receiving proportionate funding. When Quebec is not factored in, Ontario is receiving disproportionate funding.

How do you respond to Dr. Hoskins' statements on that?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I'm not 100% sure I follow. The figures that I quoted in my opening remarks are based on the funding formula that applies to provinces outside Quebec. Those were the 63% of the funding with 55% of the landings; those were the figures I had used in my remarks.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Sure, but if you do include Quebec, which has a different formula that is not based on anything to do with immigration but on the economy.... I've been trying to understand it myself.

When we factor in those, we actually see that it's almost exactly due proportional across Canada, that Ontario is receiving fair funding. My concern is that we're actually looking at apples and oranges. If we're looking at proportional funding, we have to look at the whole of Canada, ten provinces and three territories. We can't suddenly exclude one large population area as though we're talking, statistically, in a valid way.

I actually think that Ontario is probably, when we're factoring in all the ten provinces and the three territories, getting proportional funding, and now will not get proportional funding.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Mr. Chairman, I think it's difficult to make a comparison between the Quebec agreement and the funding formula that's used for other provinces. In Quebec, one of the key differences is that Quebec has responsibility for selection as well, which is something that the federal government retains vis-à-vis other provinces. So I find it hard to make a direct comparison.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: It's almost impossible, but in the actual dollars transferred, I don't think it is impossible...that there'd be a difference, which is a concern.

The Chair: I'm afraid you're over your time.

Mr. St-Cyr.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I see that the overall budget has been decreased. We could discuss that, but it is a political issue. You are not the ones who determine it.

I would like to bring up a second problem, the one that immigrant support agencies face. Funds are shifted to respond to a new reality, in other words, to places where immigrants are landing. That's how I understand it. Although, in principle, I find it commendable and understandable, I'm a little stunned by the brutality of the measure, partly because I am familiar with these types of agency. We all have them in our constituencies, especially in the urban ones. These are human beings who are working for these agencies, and we should not move them from one city to another as if they were a troupe. They have lives. They are settled in. As you said, a number of these agencies have been around for a long time. Some newcomers depend on them. And to use the example you gave us, all of a sudden, we are told that the need is now in York and we have to find a way to move everything there in a year.

So, I'm wondering something. Could you do the same thing if it involved public servants? Could you decide that, out of 60 CIC employees working in Toronto, 32 would be sent to York, 22 to

Alberta, 3 to Manitoba and so on? Can you imagine such a brutal and quick transition in the public service, or is this process only possible because these agencies respond to calls for offers and decisions to fund them are made from year to year?

• (0910)

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Mr. Chair, I will answer the question.

Thank you, Mr. Cyr.

We did an analysis to determine where newcomers are now living and what services we should offer to them. We realized that there was some overlap in services in some location...

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I'm going to stop you there because I fully understood that aspect.

[English]

The Chair: She's in the middle of a sentence. Let her at least finish her sentence.

[Translation]

Ms. Dawn Edlund: I told you about the analyses aimed at determining where the newcomers actually are and what services they need. This involves avoiding overlap and ensuring that in a region where there was...

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: But you already said that. I don't want to interrupt you, Ms. Edlund, but...

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Please let me finish my sentence.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: But you're using up my time, and the response you're giving me isn't answering my question. I know very well that, as a public servant, you have requirements and that you follow government directives, but my question is simple: could such a process be carried out as quickly in the public service? Let's look at things from another perspective: would you consider, in the very short term, say in the coming year, moving dozens of public servants from one side of Canada to the other to deal with the fact that needs have shifted from one place to another? Could you do it as quickly if it were the public service?

Ms. Dawn Edlund: For example, people in Ontario look after all the agreements that we establish with service suppliers. So, it's the people in Ontario who are going to provide this service.

Mr. Chair, as you are well aware, in operations, which is where I'm currently working, adjustments are made every year. In particular, these adjustments affect the number of visa officers at a specific posting. We change this from year to year to respond to pressures we see in the system.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Are the changes that you make from year to year as significant as those we are discussing today, or are they generally spread out over a longer period to take into account the fact that these are human resources, that they need to be managed and that it isn't necessarily possible for 10 officers to leave Toronto and be sent to York?

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Adjustments must always be made when required.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: You spoke about the importance of monitoring the needs of immigrants. But I've heard discussion about where immigrants are now going, and I've also heard discussion about where they land. They aren't the same thing. It's possible that immigrants will land in large numbers in a given city this year, but that doesn't mean that those people who arrived in that city previously are no longer there and no longer need help. Actually, I see in my community that, in many cases, it's not a matter of one year or two. Immigrants may require services for a full decade. It may take them a long time to integrate.

How do you determine where the needs are? How is it calculated?

• (0915)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Perhaps this is two questions. The first, I believe, deals with immigrants moving after they arrive in Canada. Have I understood that correctly?

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: No. You said that the needs are shifting. Is it because the immigrant populations live in other places, or because people arrive and settle in new places? If 10% more immigrants arrive in York this year over last year, it remains that the majority are still in Toronto. Some have arrived there in large numbers over the years and are still there. So, how do you calculate the needs? Do you take into account permanent residents, those who are arriving or those who are still in various cities in Canada?

[English]

Ms. Catrina Tapley: The formula is calculated based on where immigrants land, so we make our allocations based on that calculation.

So within the province—and I'm not sure, Dawn if you'd like to add to this as well—that would be what we—

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: So, it's based on the immigrants who are arriving. If I understand correctly, you presume in some way that it's basically only the immigrants arriving who need help. You assume that they are going to need help for one year and that you will then help the next ones.

[English]

Ms. Dawn Edlund: I will call it a two-step process in the sense that the funding allocation looks at where immigrants land—on that sliding scale over a three-year period that my colleague referred to. Then what we do in terms of determining the allocations within the province, for example, is to look at where newcomers are actually living now.

So when you see that the city of Toronto in the last five years has had a 30% drop in the number of immigrants living and working in that community and that they have moved elsewhere to smaller communities, like York or Kitchener-Waterloo, our funding alloca-

tion within the amount of money allocated for that province reflects that.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: If I—

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm sorry, Ms. Chow is...

Oh, go ahead. This is an important issue.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I just wanted to make one point.

We recently launched a pilot project with vouchers for language training. Without getting into the details, one of the things it's shown us is that people tend to take the service in the place they have landed. We can speak more about that, if you'd like.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to see your formula placed before us, because by my calculation, in Ontario the drop in terms of immigrants landed between 2008 and 2009, which is the figure we have—the current data—is 4,000 fewer landed immigrants, from 110,000 to 106,000.

In British Columbia, the drop from 43,992 to 41,438 is a drop of 2,560. That's a 5.8% drop. That drop is much higher than the Ontario drop, which is 3.6%.

So Ontario had a drop within one year of 3.6%, and B.C. had 5.8%. If your cut is \$53 million—pure math, pure formula—it's 81% of the cut, of which 43% is directed to Ontario. How would you justify that math? That's why I want to see the formula. That's question number one.

My second question is about the number of immigrants who are being served by all the agencies in the greater Toronto area. You have a list—we all have a list—of all the agencies that lost their funding. I'm wondering if you can provide me with the exact number of clients who will not be served because of the cuts and the number of staff that would be lost because of the cuts. Those are the two figures I'm looking for.

Three, given whatever that number is...and it could be 5,000, I don't know; I'm just pulling that out of the air. It could be 10,000. If that is the number of clients who will be impacted, do you in fact have a plan in place now so that when the people who are being laid off now—March 31 is coming—these 10,000 clients will be able to be absorbed by other agencies? If so, could you provide us with this plan?

Those are my three questions. I may have others.

• (0920)

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to deal with I hope the first question, and then my colleague Dawn will probably deal with questions two and three.

The first question is on the formula itself. We're happy to provide the formula to the committee. I would note a couple of things that make it just a little more complicated. One is that we use three-year averages. So to calculate funds for fiscal year 2011-12, we would have looked at 2007, 2008, and 2009. That's part of what's factored in.

The second part to your question—

The Chair: Perhaps you could send the formula to the clerk.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: With pleasure, Mr. Chairman.

The second part to this—we also have a calculation, as I said earlier—is that refugees count for double, recognizing that they have unique settlement needs.

The third part is how cuts were allocated. So we have two different things at play. The first is a \$53-million global cut to the settlement budget, and that is, outside of Quebec, a national cut. That was applied first, so that was applied amongst all jurisdictions. Then we had a second issue at play, which is the question of bringing how we spend money in Ontario under the national funding formula.

We were doing both of those things at the same time, so sometimes it's difficult to compare between British Columbia and Ontario. What I would add is that other provinces will still complain about their share vis-à-vis others when they look at the per immigrant amount that's happening. So this year—

Ms. Olivia Chow: I do want to point out that in terms of refugees, Ontario has a huge number, at 12,651, whereas the number of refugees in British Columbia is not even worth talking about it's so small.

At any rate, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: No, that's fine.

The formula recognizes those unique needs of refugees, so that does count for more in the formula.

But just in terms of, even now, underfunding for fiscal year 2011-12, I would just point that in Ontario it will equate to about \$3,248 per immigrant, compared to British Columbia, where it will be about \$2,615 per immigrant.

Dawn.

Ms. Dawn Edlund: On the second and third questions, our focus is on serving the needs of the immigrants; that's a very important principle behind our funding decisions. As was said in the opening remarks, in addition to—

Ms. Olivia Chow: Can you give me the number?

Ms. Dawn Edlund: I'm working my way up to that.

What we're confident about is that there won't be a disruption in service to the clients in the greater Toronto area, because we have factored that in.

Ms. Olivia Chow: How many people are impacted?

Ms. Dawn Edlund: There are some service provider organizations that will no longer be funded in the greater Toronto area, but there are new organizations that are coming online.

Ms. Olivia Chow: How many people are being impacted?

Ms. Dawn Edlund: I don't have exact figures on how many people are impacted. Again, to return to my first principle, the services will continue to be provided by possibly different service provider organizations, or a different combination of service provider organizations. So the effect on the clients and the transition at the end of this fiscal year are all being managed.

Ms. Olivia Chow: But I don't understand. I've seen the applications, and when they apply for funding, the agencies are required to tell you how many, precisely how many, clients they serve. You require that number. You have those numbers.

Each agency, whether it's a Salvation Army women's centre or a community action centre or ACAS—any number of them—will tell you precisely how many people they serve in that program you fund. Especially with ISAP funding and LINC funding, they have to give you those numbers.

Surely you can tell us, then, how many immigrants will be impacted in each of the agencies. You have to have that number.

• (0925)

Ms. Dawn Edlund: In response to the call for proposal process, over 450 organizations put in applications for proposals. In those proposals, yes, they put forward the services they wished to provide, the number of clients they would serve, the outcomes they would seek to support, how they were in line with the programming priorities of the department, etc. But with the amount of money available...there was not a full amount of money available. Over \$700 million was sought in those proposals—

Ms. Olivia Chow: Are you—

The Chair: No, I'm sorry, Ms. Chow. We have to—

Ms. Olivia Chow: I understand that, but she wasn't answering the question.

The Chair: I know you're all excited, but we have to move on.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Would she be able to provide that number for us?

The Chair: Well, we'll have to do it the next time. I have to...

You tell me to follow these rules, and I'm doing my best.

Ms. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all of you for your time.

Can you please tell us what is behind the overall reduction in settlement funding, and why Ontario is taking the brunt of all these reductions?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I see two parts to this question. The first was asking what was the genesis of the \$53-million cut at CIC.

This was part of the strategic review process. Citizenship and Immigration Canada was under strategic review two years ago, in 2009. As a result, the budget of the department was reduced by about \$67 million, or 4.3% of its current operating budget—so reallocated to other priorities. Its current budget is about \$1.5 million.

So the bulk of those cuts, about \$59 million, will come from settlement programming. There are other things around administrative savings, and there are things that affect the Metropolis project. But the bulk of them come from those savings.

The second part of your question, if I understood well, was on how this affects Ontario. I want to come back to two things that are at play. The first is the \$53-million cut to settlement services, and that's applied nationally. The second part that affects Ontario is that under the previous agreement between Canada and Ontario, Ontario had a separate formula for funding that was outside the national formula we use for other provinces and territories outside of Quebec.

This year, with the end of the current agreement, we have seen this as an opportunity to more fairly allocate funds outside of Quebec. So we've used this opportunity to start to transition Ontario into a national funding formula, or bring Ontario into that formula. Those are the two things at play with Ontario this year.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Chair, the rest of my time I'll pass on to Mr. Dykstra.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the issues you brought up was the funding per immigrant in Ontario versus other provinces. Could you extrapolate a little bit more as to why that average is so much higher in Ontario than it is in other provinces?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

I'll come back to the question of the funding formula. Under the previous agreement with Ontario, there was a separate funding allocation process. While we tried to achieve some fairness amongst other provinces outside of Quebec on per-immigrant funding, Ontario had a separate agreement. Now that the agreement is about to expire, we've taken this opportunity to bring Ontario into that formula so that we can have a more equitable distribution of funding on a per-immigrant basis.

I think I said in my opening remarks that had we kept the previous arrangement, this year there would have been about a thousand-dollar difference on a per-immigrant basis between what we were funding in Ontario and what we were funding in B.C., for example. So we've gone a ways to narrowing that gap and distributing those resources.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Ten years ago the Auditor General did issue a report on what was then termed the "billion-dollar boondoggle",

because grants and contributions were made to not-for-profit organizations, and there was little to no follow-up or standards or criteria that those groups were able to at least state or meet. Obviously, the response to that, at that time, is the direction you're taking now.

Could you comment a little bit further on the importance of ensuring that the programs the federal government runs in this ministry meet objectives and meet standards and come to a conclusion that we can actually verify the services delivered?

● (0930)

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair. I'll speak to that, if I may.

I spoke earlier about our principles about meeting immigrants' needs and responsible funding. More and more in the way in which we distribute the settlement funding across Canada, Citizenship and Immigration has moved to a call for proposals process, which is an open and transparent process with standards that are set out ahead of time. Organizations that wish to seek that funding are given ample opportunity to make their case as to how their proposals meet immigrants' needs in the places where they are going to be living, that they're addressing programming priorities, that the organizations have strong governments and strong management accountability, and that we're getting value for money.

We really want to be satisfied in entrusting Canadian taxpayer money to service provider organizations that they can meet those kinds of tests, and that we work with them over the course of a contribution agreement—if we are entering into one with them—that we continue to monitor them both from a financial perspective and activity perspective to make sure the programming that they had said they will deliver and we know is needed is actually being delivered in the way it was set out.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Thank you.

In 2005-06, settlement services across the country were funded to the tune of about \$111 million, correct?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's the figure for Ontario. It was about \$111 million for Ontario, and I think across the country it was about \$200 million.

Ms. Deborah Tunis (Director General, Integration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration): Yes.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Let's stick with Ontario. That seems to be the basis of the discussion this morning.

It was \$111 million in Ontario in 2005-06. It's \$340 million in 2011-12.

Do you think we are better able today, through our organizations, to deliver services to immigrants and refugees who come to this province? Or do you think we were better at delivering those services in 2005-06?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: No, we are, I think, better able to deliver those services now. We've also seen—I think Ms. Edlund can speak to this as well—an expansion in the capacity of groups and organizations to deliver those services over those years.

Ms. Dawn Edlund: What I can say on this call for proposals process in Ontario is that just over 80% of the service provider organizations that we want to negotiate a contribution agreement with are folks that we have been funding already. So we see a stability in the sector. We see a capacity in the sector to deliver the needed services in the locations.

We also see, with just under 20% of new service providers coming online, a renewal of the organizations that provide these services.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Is that it?

The Chair: That's it.

I have a brief question, perhaps as a result of questioning from Mr. Oliphant.

The funding changes—or realigning, or whatever the wording we're using—is based on numbers, provincial numbers? Is that what this is all about, that some provinces are increasing and some provinces are decreasing in immigrants and refugees? That's what it's based on?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: That's correct. The funding—

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant asked a question about needs, and he's right; I think we all have areas where there may be language differences, more so in some areas than others, and economic differences, more so in some areas than others.

Also, being from Ontario, I can tell you that there are areas in the Peel region, for example, where the number of immigrants has gone up. Maybe it's down in Ontario...and I believe you; one of you has a chart somewhere that shows the numbers going down in Ontario, but—

Ms. Olivia Chow: It's appendix A.

The Chair: Appendix A? Thank you, Ms. Chow.

But there are areas in the province of Ontario where the numbers have gone up. As Mr. Oliphant has said, there are areas where perhaps needs have either stayed the same or have gone up.

Maybe it's getting back to the formula question that Ms. Chow asked.

Could you comment on that?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I think it will be a two-part answer between Ms. Edlund and I.

First, on the formula overall, yes, it's based on landings by province and on a three-year average. What we take into account is that refugees have higher needs than other immigrants who land. So if there is a higher proportion of refugees who land in a province, that's reflected in the formula and in the funding that's provided.

On the second part, how we allocate funds intraprovincially, or how we would allocate funds to service provider organizations based on where immigrants have landed within the province, for example in Ontario, is something that we have tried to do this year.

Ms. Edlund, I don't know if you'd like to comment further on that.

• (0935)

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Well, what we know from the call for proposal process is that there was over \$700 million requested...for our eventual pot of money of \$346.5 million. Even for those organizations that put in strong proposals and had robust governance and management and so on and which we were confident could deliver the settlement services needed, the total of what they would have wanted to have was over \$600 million.

It's clear, in that kind of situation, that you have to make tough choices about how you're going to be delivering the services in the most cost-effective fashion. So if it turns out, in one geographic area, that we have three or four same-service provider organizations providing similar services, with four different sets of administration costs and overhead and so on, if you can, in that set of circumstances...and if there is a lack of, say, smaller class sizes, while in another area we have waiting lists for language classes, you want to balance that out and smooth the way. So our first principle, of meeting the needs of immigrants, making these tough choices, can actually be met.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): I'd like to go back to something the government side said and that you agreed to, that we are better at immigration settlement services now than we were five or six years ago.

That is true? You confirm that?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I would say that the increase in funding has allowed us to work with service provider organizations and to expand capacity and build capacity—

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Excellent. So over the past five or six years, the increase in funding has had a tremendously positive impact, both on the immigrants and on the communities.

Which government signed that five-year increase in funding? Or on what date was the original agreement signed?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I...

Mr. Justin Trudeau: It was November 21, 2005, under a Liberal government led by Paul Martin, for hundreds of millions of dollars of increases over the next five years.

We are now at the end of that five years—

An hon. member: [Inaudible—Editor]

The Chair: We need order, please, Mr. Dykstra.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: We're now at the end of that five years, and even though this government is cutting millions of dollars from settlement funding, they're still spending, as you've said, as the minister has said many times, millions of dollars.

Can I then conclude that you believe, and you've demonstrated, that settlement funding works, that it's better to train and help integrate new arrivals with language training than to have them, for example, on welfare or social assistance or not contributing to the economy? Settlement funding does work, in your assessment.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Yes. We believe it's better that immigrants integrate into society and are employed gainfully, yes.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: And it's not just better in a moral sense but better in an economic sense. It makes sense to give them the tools to contribute as opposed to just being passive and receiving.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: We agree.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Excellent.

So at a time when the minister has touted that immigration levels are stable or perhaps even increasing—but we can at least agree that they're stable—at a time when we know that needs of immigrants are at the very least stable if not increasing, as we've seen anecdotally in many of our ridings, it doesn't seem logical to me that given the fragile economic recovery that we're facing right now, by cutting \$53 million from settlement funding globally, we are depriving thousands upon thousands of immigrants from integration tools and settlement tools that would allow them to contribute to their economy rather than be receivers of welfare and social programs.

That's the part I don't understand. Why are we cutting \$53 million when it's an economic benefit to make sure that we are training and providing settlement services?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of different parts to the question, and—

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Just that part: why are we cutting \$53 million? Please focus on that.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: The \$53-million cut for this year was part of the strategic review exercise, which the department underwent a year ago. But in this case, it's a careful balancing act, because what we saw was that despite the increase in funding over the last six years, the uptake to most settlement programs had only increased by about 31%, and even 25% of eligible permanent residents only take up federal language training.

For us, it's a bit of a balance, so when we—

• (0940)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: So you've seen that needs have decreased across the country, then, that we can cut?

Ms. Catrina Tapley: No, I'm not saying that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Then the numbers have decreased.

Ms. Catrina Tapley: There wasn't a corresponding one-for-one ratio between increases to settlement funding and uptake in certain programs or participation in certain programs. I think it reflects some of what we tried to do under—

Mr. Justin Trudeau: So participation is down, and we're spending less because people are participating less, even though

we know that we need them to go through these programs so they can contribute to our society in this time of fragile economic recovery.

I'm just not understanding the logic. And I apologize, because I know it wasn't your decision, but I'm just trying to....

Ms. Catrina Tapley: I think, Mr. Chairman, when the department looked at the strategic review tests on efficiencies and effectiveness, on how programs are delivered, whether they deliver real results for Canadians and provide value for money in addition to priorities and focus on core roles and programming, when we looked at the basket of funding we have for settlement services, we were hard-pressed to find that one-for-one ratio. In this, when we looked at delivering results for Canadians and value for money, that's where we looked at making those choices on reallocation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I'm going to go back to the transition. I am quite concerned about how quickly it happens.

I am very familiar the agencies that work with immigrants. The people who work there are passionate people who do an incredible job, let's admit, often for laughable wages and in extremely risky conditions. If we want to continue to attract people to these areas, they must not get the impression that they are cheap labour or expendable, only to be tossed away once they are no longer needed, people whom we tell that their funding has ended, perhaps for good reason because needs have shifted elsewhere. In some cases, this results in the agency shutting down and everyone losing their jobs. So, new people need to be trained and encouraged to go where the needs are and start the cycle over again.

In my opinion, this constant turnover within the agencies is very costly for the community. And it's the same thing for all our agencies, whether they operate for the immigrants or for the rest of society.

The public service often uses ways to try to absorb these changes. We use attrition and limit the creation of new programs in some places until a balance is attained. However, these types of measures do not seem to be in place here.

But in your document, you say that, to minimize the burden associated with the transition imposed on agencies providing services to newcomers, Citizenship and Immigration Canada will continue to work closely with the agencies that were not retained.

What does that mean? What does "work closely with" mean? Will they be given interim funds?

[English]

Ms. Dawn Edlund: Thanks very much for the question, Mr. Chair.

What I would say in relation to this is that, first, with the call for proposals process, we have to recall the first principle: that it's merit-based and it's competitive. So we have service provider organizations that had the full opportunity to make their case on how they were going to serve the needs in a responsible manner—

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Ms. Edlund, my question wasn't about...

[English]

Ms. Dawn Edlund: —and they had weak proposals, which meant that they weren't funded.

Now, to get to the transition period—

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: *Voilà.*

Ms. Dawn Edlund: —certainly, the idea is that we are working with the organizations that we used to fund and that will no longer be funded by us in the next fiscal year, to manage that transition as they are winding down their operations, and to ensure that their clientele is served by new service provider organizations that are coming online or others that are in the same geographic area. We are working with the organizations to manage that transition.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I have another question for you, but I want to say something first.

We have listened to your presentation from the start. You have had the opportunity to explain your point. We read the documents before arriving, so we understand what is going on. When we ask you questions, we expect to get answers to those questions. We have already had the rhetoric from the department. I understand that you have a job to do, but we do too.

So I would appreciate it if, when we ask a question, we get an answer to the question we asked. Otherwise, you can tell us that you don't know the answer, and that's it.

Can these support measures eventually include bridging funding to enable the existing agencies to at least continue to provide the same services?

● (0945)

[English]

Ms. Dawn Edlund: No. It does not include that type of financing, because the contribution agreement we have with certain organizations that put forward weak proposals and that will not receive funding will draw to a close at the end of March.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think we have run out of time.

I want to thank all of you from the department for coming here and explaining a challenging issue to us, because particularly those in Ontario are being asked questions on this. Thank you very much for coming.

We will suspend.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

The Chair: We will reconvene. We have three groups before us.

One is in Thunder Bay, which we're seeing through a video conference. Ms. Cathy Woodbeck is the executive director of the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association.

Good morning to you, Ms. Woodbeck. Can you hear us?

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck (Executive Director, Thunder Bay Multicultural Association): I can hear you well. Thank you.

The Chair: We also have with us Colin Gomez, the coordinator of language instruction for newcomers to Canada, from the Naylor-McLeod Group Limited.

Finally, we have Diane Walter, the vice-chairperson of the board of directors, and Marion Newrick...

Am I pronouncing that correctly?

● (0950)

Ms. Marion Newrick (Executive Director, Toronto, Community Action Resource Centre): Yes. It's "Newrick".

The Chair: Marion Newrick is the executive director, and they're with the Community Action Resource Centre.

Good morning to you, Mr. Gomez and ladies. Thank you for coming. You will each have up to seven minutes to make a presentation to the committee.

We will start with Mr. Gomez.

Mr. Colin Gomez (Coordinator, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, Naylor-McLeod Group Limited): Thank you very much.

First of all, I want to say it's an honour and privilege to be here today. I really want to thank Guelph's Liberal MP Frank Valeriote for putting my name forward to this committee.

I have a prepared submission, but I'd like to speak more spontaneously, because I think I do that better. Also, what I've heard this morning has been very interesting to me, and I think I can respond to it.

At Naylor-McLeod we are a small school in a small city. In some ways I've felt that what government representatives have been saying here is that we ought to be favoured in terms of their policy of shifting funding, as I understand it. We also have an incredible amount of experience. We've been doing LINC training for more than 18 years, as long as LINC has been in existence. We've always been congratulated on our efforts and we've always been very responsible in our submission of all the required paperwork to the best of my knowledge.

We are a small school, as I said. We serve approximately 90 people in Guelph. That's 80 in LINC and 10 in ELT, which is a fairly recent program and very successful. I'll talk about ELT in a minute, because that's important to what's happening here.

But even though it seems like a small number, in fact that represents about half the number of immigrants being served in Guelph by only two schools. So when we are closed, there will be only one school left, no choice for immigrants in Guelph as to what kind of school they go to.

The other school in Guelph is run by the school board. It's quite different from ours, because they are able to combine, in single classes, students from their ESL program, which is run by the school board, and LINC students. So they end up with much larger classes than we have.

We feel that our classes have a pretty much perfect teacher-to-student ratio, about 15 people per class, roughly. I can say, because I've been teaching in LINC and ESL in private language schools for 13 years in Toronto and Guelph, that this is the most successful program I've ever been involved with. We have genuinely happy people.

I'd like to say that there are real advantages in small schools like ours, because we really can honestly say we are like a family. I would like to address this issue of the impact that these cuts have on immigrants, because I can speak to you about my friends in this case, my friends in our school. I can say they are absolutely traumatized by these cuts.

We, being as responsible as possible, cannot give them a clear answer as to what their future holds. We have a pretty fairly established idea that the other school in Guelph does not have the physical capacity or seat allotment to handle their needs—at least not for a full year when the next call for proposals process goes forward, because it's already past, of course. But I won't speak to what they can do, because I don't represent that school.

What I would like to say is that coming from a small school in a small city, we have learned a lot from our immigrants. We have faced all of the usual questions about why, for example, skilled immigrants frequently give up the process of trying to settle in Canada and return to their home countries in frustration—people like doctors and nurses and other skilled professionals.

We have had cases like that in Guelph, but we've also had quite a number of success stories of people who've found meaningful employment. It's partly because we can help them more individually as a small school. We can understand their needs. We can even adjust how we teach them, because we have that flexibility. We pay attention to what they need. With our having recently gotten the

contract to do the ELT program, we can do that even better by training concentrated groups of nurses, doctors, and customer service people, again with great success with a job shadow program in that case.

I want to speak about the process in Guelph as it's been playing out lately. My understanding of what's happening is that CIC has cut funding to our LINC program but has decided that ELT could continue. What they haven't understood, and what's now becoming clear, is that the ELT program will have to also stop, because it cannot be sustained without the LINC program. We simply can't run our school to service only 10 individuals.

• (0955)

The Chair: I'm afraid we'll have to stop, Mr. Gomez.

Am I right...?

No, I'm mistaken. Please proceed.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Okay. I'm not sure how much time I have left, in that case.

The Chair: I'll give you a few extra seconds.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes, okay.

Speaking about these things, I wanted to address....

The Chair: I threw you off. I apologize.

Mr. Colin Gomez: That's all right.

Well, I wanted to say, again, that we have some idea of what the impact of these cuts means to our people. But even when we're shutting down, we have hope. We have hope that perhaps this decision might even be reversed. Maybe that's a faint hope, because it doesn't seem to make any sense at all. It doesn't make any sense for Guelph. It doesn't make any sense for our people.

Of course, I've heard things from government representatives here about statistics for Ontario, but our students, our friends, are not statistics, and they don't understand that argument, which we duly presented to them, as we should. They haven't ceased to exist. They're still here. They're people with needs, and they are very important, as we always tell them.

When we teach LINC, we don't just teach English language. We teach about building a country. We teach about the history of Canada as a nation of immigrants. We teach them the value that they have for us as a country. And we feel like we're betraying them, in this case. They feel betrayed, and they have a right to feel betrayed.

I know that many of them are going home, because many of them feel that in the year to come, they'll have nothing in this whole adjustment process, if it can even be achieved at all.

It's very sad that this should happen. I don't want to be confrontational here, but I feel very strongly about this. I haven't mentioned, of course, the impact it has on teachers in this situation with the cutbacks all over Ontario. We have people who have been living in the province all their lives who have really been themselves traumatized about trying to find work where the job situation is pretty perilous now for LINC teachers—not to mention the coordinators.

This has an impact on a lot of people, and it will certainly have an impact on the city of Guelph. Guelph is well known, I think, in general as one of the five or six best cities to live in in Canada. It's been advertised that way, and it's true. But I can say now that with this loss of services to immigrants, it must be one of the worst places for immigrants to settle in, because—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gomez.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Okay.

The Chair: Again, I apologize for interrupting you.

Ms. Newrick.

Ms. Marion Newrick: Thank you for this opportunity to make the presentation today.

Community Action Resource Centre is a grassroots community-based organization in the west end of Toronto.

We were informed through a form letter just before Christmas that our federal settlement funding would end 100% on March 31. This brief was prepared with input from several other organizations, all of whom received the same form letter. These organizations include the Afghan Association of Ontario, the African Training and Employment Centre, the Bloor Information and Life Skills Centre, the Eritrean Canadian Community Centre, the Ethiopian Association, and the South Asian Women's Centre.

I would like to first say that it's disappointing that so many ethno-specific agencies who serve diverse cultures, and who have been severely impacted by this unfair decision, have not been given the opportunity to speak to the standing committee this week. They feel that their voices have been silenced. Nonetheless, we collectively appreciate this opportunity to tell you what is happening to us and its impact on our communities.

This decision by CIC will impact ethno-specific agencies particularly hard. It is inherently unfair for an immigration ministry to have systemic practices that destroy the newcomer communities that they are supposedly welcoming into our country.

A prime example is that of the Afghan Association. The federal government recently brought to the safety of Canada 1,500 Afghan

immigrants who had acted as interpreters in Kandahar. Now the same ministry is de-funding the agency that is providing socio-cultural adjustments and other supports to these newcomers. This agency will also be left with several years of leased premises that must be paid, a debt of more than \$300,000. This community can never recover from this level of debt. It is inconceivable that our government can think that this is justifiable.

According to Statistics Canada, there is still an increase in the number of immigrants who choose to call Ontario home, about a 23% increase. Our settlement staff help newcomers apply for health cards, PR cards, or other government documents. They help them get their children into school. They help them find housing, English classes, and trauma counselling. They help them get their documents translated. They help with issues of discrimination or around employment matters.

For some newcomers, the staff are the closest they have to a family member or a friend in their new country, reducing isolation and reducing the reliance on expensive health and mental health services. Our staff are not sitting around doing nothing, as if all of the issues for newcomers in Toronto are taken care of or are improving. In fact, we all know that is not the case.

The January 2011 update of the Toronto immigrant data employment initiative reports that, overall, immigrants lost 300 jobs, while Canadian-born gained 90,400 jobs. There were large job losses, 62,700 job losses, for immigrants in professional, scientific, and technical services; health care and social assistance; and the public administration sector.

From some of the statistics being used in the media, it would appear that temporary farm worker landings are included, which shifts the percentages. This class has almost doubled since 2003. The majority of these are in Alberta. There are many documented instances of abuse in the creation of a subclass of immigrant worker; on the one hand is the substantial loss in the number of immigrants gaining professional jobs, and on the other is the creation of this temporary subclass. Another type of immigrant, in the economic or provincial nominee program, does not require the same level and type of settlement services as the newcomer who comes from an area of conflict, war, or deep poverty.

There are so many issues at play. It is a complex set of circumstances. One would think that all of these factors and facets, and more, would be carefully considered before randomly implementing massive cuts such as these.

These are people's lives. We can't just play around with statistics. People are not numbers.

We, as agencies on the ground, know what we are seeing and dealing with every day, and we're saying that CIC is wrong in this case. The impacts of this decision, if allowed to stand, will be too great on Ontario, and in particular on Toronto.

Thank you.

•(1000)

Ms. Diane Walter (Vice-Chairperson, Board of Directors, Community Action Resource Centre): I would like to thank the committee for giving us this opportunity to present today.

I'd like to talk about the decision to de-fund. Since the notices to agencies were given in December, CIC has offered a variety of explanations for their decisions: Ontario immigration numbers are dropping substantially, therefore we should have less funding for newcomer services; this is not a cut, but a redistribution to other provinces where immigration is increasing; agencies have to be demonstrating a high level of performance and accountability in order to receive funding, implying that our agencies have been deficient in meeting our targets.

The ethno-specific agencies were severely cut. They also talked about how ethno-specific agencies were only serving their communities alone, which is total misinformation.

In our case, in March 2010, CIC provided renovations and moneys to purchase new equipment and furniture for a new location dedicated to settlement services. We signed a five-year lease. Four years will remain after March 31, for which we must pay. CIC is leaving us with a debt of over \$160,000. As a board member, that concerns me greatly. CIC is indicating that they expect the return of any equipment purchased with CIC funding.

In a few short weeks from now, thousands of newcomer clients will be left without any sort of settlement program or workers to assist them. Our agency has already given termination notices to six workers, and our board is considering what the impact will be across the rest of the organization in order to manage the debt we will be left with after March 31.

It is estimated that almost 1,000 workers across Ontario are facing termination from their employment in less than two months from now. If it were a large corporation laying off so many workers, there would be legal obligations to have severance packages and an employee assistance plan. This is a huge financial toll, and there will be a drain on the charitable resources after March 31. CIC has provided no transitional plan to agencies like ours.

I'd like to conclude by summarizing this; I've cut a lot out, because we were restricted in our time.

Information on the decisions re the cut from CIC over the last few months has been vague and very generic. The non-profit charitable sector, in particular in Toronto, is being gutted by CIC.

CIC is leaving a legacy that they're actually bankrupting some of our communities. There was no consultation, no thought, no plan, no appeal—no care for the mayhem left behind.

We have a few recommendations, if I have time, Mr. Chair.

•(1005)

The Chair: Go for it.

Ms. Diane Walter: Do I need to go fast? Okay.

First is full reinstatement of the funding cuts to agencies to ensure there's no loss of services to new immigrants in our communities. A new COIA should be signed immediately.

Second, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration should come to Toronto to hear directly from those agencies impacted, especially those that have been de-funded totally.

Third, there should be a requirement that CIC consult with the provincial government and the sector to ensure that change of this magnitude is incorporated, and all relevant factors are taken into consideration.

Fourth, a full review of CIC practices towards settlement agencies should be implemented.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Woodbeck in Thunder Bay, it's your turn.

How's the weather up there?

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck: It's very cold. It's a pretty chilly morning.

The Chair: Well, we'll try to warm it up here.

You have up to seven minutes. Thank you.

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck: Thank you. And thank you again for accommodating me up here in the north when I wasn't able to appear before you.

We are the only settlement agency, actually a one-stop shop, for everyone who settles in northwestern Ontario. That's Sault Ste. Marie to the Manitoba border, approximately 1,500 kilometres and about 500,000 kilometres square. So anyone who is landing in that area is, really, our client.

We have had to take the approach of a one-stop shop, which works very well, in order to give and offer service to new Canadians in the northwest Ontario region. No one agency could take on one program at a time; the administration burden of that would just be too huge.

So we have four CIC programs running in our office for people spread across all of northwestern Ontario. We have a LINC language school. We have an assessment centre. We have settlement services, as well as what was formerly called the host program, which now has been changed to community connections.

Those programs working together really serve the newcomers who arrive in Thunder Bay and in the region through the access to each of them in one stop, which I think is probably one of the best approaches to newcomer settlement.

Our school serves about 70 students each term. We also hold a summer school class for those who can't be there during the regular year, and an evening class for those who are working during the day.

The northern region is also served through access via teleconference or video conference, like this, to place students into what is called the LINC home study, where folks can study online or by correspondence through a connection with us here in Thunder Bay. So we're the hub of the north.

We also provide interpretation and translation services through a provincial program as well as several other newcomer services—anti-racism, anti-oppression work, different things that we do through our association. We work very closely with our community and with all of the northern communities on settling new Canadians into our region.

We've had somewhat of a boom with mining in the north and we've had the promise of the “Ring of Fire” and of things that are going to be moving forward in northwestern Ontario. So we anticipate an increase in newcomers arriving in Thunder Bay.

We find that those who come, stay. We have an influx of folks from other communities who do come to Thunder Bay. Secondary migration to our region is fairly high, and we have not a lot of movement.

We also have a community of 300 Karen-speaking Burmese refugees in Thunder Bay, with seven more arriving tomorrow. So we have a mix of independents, professionals, and refugees arriving, most of whom apply for citizenship within the three-year period. Once their three years in Canada comes, they are, most often, applying for citizenship, which is really interesting.

There are no ethnic enclaves that newcomers can move into, so learning the language is key. Becoming a part of the community is critical. And that's what our services aim to help them do: learn the language, adjust, integrate, and settle successfully in all of our northern communities. We have a satellite office in Kenora that provides service to Dryden and Kenora, as well.

So why Thunder Bay? I think it's the smaller city, the safety, the available services—we have no wait lists in any of our programs—and available housing at good cost. We have people arriving in Thunder Bay on a weekly basis—newcomers.

There's so much more to settling newcomers than just finding a job. The family settlement and integration is what is key, and a holistic integration of newcomer families into our region. Our whole community is involved in this.

We were not seriously affected when the large influx of money came into the province with the COIA agreement. We really were given what we considered the funds needed for operating costs, true costs, at that time. So it wasn't a huge influx that's now gone, although now, with the cuts, our region has seriously been cut for service delivery and positions that will be lost.

● (1010)

Serving a huge region and a huge territory involves a lot of administrative costs. Being able to balance all that while providing front-line services as our main priority is really going to be difficult for us. We've had a fairly sizable percentage cut to our budget, and the northern region budget was cut quite severely.

We've been part of a small centre strategy, and I think that's critical. Small centres across Canada are a group that got together to try to look at how to create welcoming communities in small centres and how to increase and encourage immigration to the small centres. Communities in Newfoundland, and Moose Jaw, Thunder Bay, and Victoria got together and talked about settling newcomers in our regions and the support needed to do that and move out of the larger centres. I'd be happy to discuss that more later.

We felt we were partners in providing service with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. We're the on-the-ground front-line service that provides what newcomers need to the point of becoming citizens. We feel like that partnership is not there any longer. It's a funding relationship now. It's a little different. We used to be able to provide the service and do that in a good clear partnership.

I think our region faces larger challenges. Occupancy costs are difficult, just from the point of heating and keeping one office open. To be able to do that, we have to have all the programs running in one place and combine all the occupancy and accommodation costs. It makes it difficult when you have to cut. Where do you cut? How do you do that without cutting staff? How do you provide the best front-line service? How do you still stay afloat? It's been difficult.

We would love to see something in RAP for the north for smaller communities, where we could support government-assisted refugees and joint assistance sponsorship refugees to come to our region where they can settle quite quickly and the community is very accepting and the service is available here. I think looking at how the refugee assistance programs could be expanded to some smaller centres would be beneficial and would provide some of the support we need.

The Chair: Perhaps you could conclude, Ms. Woodbeck. Thank you.

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck: Sure.

I think as far as nation-building goes, and keeping the smaller communities afloat and an influx of service to our area and bringing new Canadians to Thunder Bay and to our region for jobs that we have available—there is employment available—it's critical to remember the smaller centres, the remote areas, the northern areas, can quite effectively settle newcomers but need the funding and support to do that.

• (1015)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Woodbeck, and the other presenters.

Members of the committee will now have some questions.

Mr. Kennedy, welcome to the immigration committee. You have up to seven minutes.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll share my time with Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

First of all, thank you all for coming and for what you're doing. I'm embarrassed that you have to be here. I've looked at these cuts since they came out in December, and there is no rationale that makes sense here. The minister didn't grace us with his presence, but these look very political in nature.

However, we would like to bring a light onto them. We'd like people to take this seriously.

I appreciate, Mr. Gomez, that you really do feel for the people who are being taught and will be taught no more in your community.

I mean, I think it's amazing that we don't look at that as some kind of tragedy, because somebody is learning, is going to go to work and support themselves, and in 60 days we're going to pull the plug on that. It makes no sense whatsoever. You know, this place is a bit of a bubble, but you want to believe that some of that can get outside of the bubble.

I guess what I want to put to you is that we've done some research, and it might not surprise you that some of this looks quite partisan-inspired in terms of fingerprints.

Ms. Newrick, I want to ask you about the Toronto experience. You've been working with a number of agencies in Toronto. How many of those agencies do you think feel comfortable, the ones that are...?

I want to make a point, too, that the ministry didn't make.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, if I could have one minute to ask you, is it possible, through you, to get a list of the allocations that have been made? The ministry didn't supply us with that information. We've

been able to find out that the agencies that have been cut are very concentrated.

Ms. Newrick, can you tell us if any of the agencies you're working with believe there is some place for their clients to go?

Ms. Marion Newrick: Part of the problem is that such a determination has not been made. It's not only that they can go there, but that there is a service that will help them when they get there.

For example, it's not good sending a Vietnamese-speaking client to another agency if they don't have Vietnamese-speaking staff, or if they don't have specific expertise.

None of that mapping has been done at all. There has been no help provided to us to even determine if there is in actual fact another place to send our clients.

Also, there's the fact that other agencies are being cut back as well. So how can they expect to maintain their own service levels when they're cut back, as well as absorb our clients?

None of that thinking has been done.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: That's a point that has been made at these hearings. In addition to agencies that are being closed down both in Toronto and other points in the province, there are 33 agencies that are having their money taken away. There are at least 40 other agencies with cuts of between 15% and 50%. We have, I think, a significant problem believing that the ministry has things in hand.

I asked the regional chairs, the people in charge, where the contingency plan is. Have any of your agencies, or any of the ones you've collaborated with in terms of understanding these cuts, seen any contingency plans? Our estimate is that there is in the order of 100,000 people who are affected by these cuts across the province.

Has anybody seen the ministry...which we just saw here, some of the representatives? Are they in the field? Are they trying to match up needs? Is something happening with just two months to go until these cuts happen?

Ms. Marion Newrick: I was having difficulty hearing back there, but I thought I heard one of the CIC staff say they were helping us with transition plans...?

A voice: Yes, they said that.

Ms. Marion Newrick: They said that. Okay.

We have had zero contact. I need you to know that nobody has contacted us whatsoever, other than telling us in the form letter in December that they're not funding us anymore. We sent an e-mail to a generic e-mail address, and we all got back the same paragraph that covered every possible deficiency in an application.

That's as much as we know at this point.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: I want to pass this on to my colleague, but I want to put a piece of information on the table.

The current government gave Toronto only a quarter of the money that was due to it for the growth of needs. The average amount per new immigrant in Toronto, even by the government's worst-case scenario numbers, is less than two-thirds of the average for Ontario, or for the rest of the country. Toronto has been taken from a position of having less money to having still less money. That's based on a letter provided by the minister to the city council of Toronto today.

I'm very sympathetic to the situation in Thunder Bay and Guelph, because where else will people go? These are communities that are struggling to grow and get past economic difficulty.

I want to make sure that we somehow get information that shows where the cuts actually are. As more information is emerging, I think these agencies are being victimized.

I want to find out a little bit more about the uniqueness.

Mr. Gomez, I don't want to press your point, but you've got 90 people. How many of them will be able to be served once you have to shut your doors?

• (1020)

Mr. Colin Gomez: We have absolutely no idea, and nothing at all has been communicated to us so we can communicate it to our students.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Ms. Newrick, you're talking about 1,500 translators who served the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and who can no longer stay in Afghanistan because it's not safe for them. The Afghan Association was contracted to provide services to those translators, and now they're being put out of business. Is that correct?

Ms. Marion Newrick: That's my understanding, yes, because I was asked by this agency to present....

I was at a workshop put on by United Way in Toronto to help us deal with the trauma of what's happening to us all, and I was speaking to one of the board members during the session. The look in his eyes was one I can't forget; it was disbelief. He said they don't know how to deal with this. He said they were serving these 1,500 interpreters, who were brought here with fanfare; Canada is doing a great thing—which it is—but now they're cutting us off. How can this be, and what do we do?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Is there anybody who wants to hazard a guess as to how a new Canadian is going to feel to have their little bit of dollars for language training, for job search—to get on their own two feet—sacrificed for tax cuts to large cooperations, or to make the finance minister look like a better manager off their back?

I know it's hard. We don't have somebody here today who is with their agency. I know you don't want to step into their shoes, but these cuts are taking something away from them. I'm wondering if you can help to convey what that means.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Well, when our students got the bad news, many of them wrote letters to the editor of the local Guelph newspaper, the *Guelph Tribune*. I'm not sure how many there were, maybe six or seven letters. Some of them were very, very articulate. We're very proud of them, especially of their progress with the English language.

One of our students suggested that money might be found for immigrants—I hope this isn't too political a thing to say, but it was

his idea—perhaps by reducing our commitment to a war in Afghanistan.

The Chair: Okay—

Mr. Colin Gomez: So that was his reaction.

The Chair: That's interesting.

Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

Monsieur St-Cyr.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

During your presentations, you all addressed the issue of the impact these reductions will have. I'm asking each of you to repeat or confirm it.

What would the impact of these reductions have for each of your agencies with respect to the amounts, the percentage of your budget and the very future of your agency?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Gomez: Well, our agency is being completely shut down, so that would be 100%, ultimately, although, as I said, we usually say it's 90% of the funding because that's the LINC program. The CIC had an idea to continue with ELT, but as I said, it's completely uneconomic and absurd, really.

So ultimately it's 100% of funding that will be lost.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: How much would this 90% being cut and leading to another 10% represent?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes, absolutely. All of the LINC funding will be cut, therefore ELT can't continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: How much would it be in dollars?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Gomez: It's around \$300,000, a little over for LINC. I'd have to do the math, I guess, for ELT; but I'm not the ELT coordinator.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Okay.

Madam Newrick.

Ms. Marion Newrick: We were cut 100% of our ISAP settlement services—\$305,000. We still retain provincial settlement funding. I would add that Minister Hoskins met with us twice already, and he considers us very strong and valuable partners in the delivering of settlement services. He made that very clear. It represents about 40% of our overall budget.

The difficulty for us is that as well as the debt of \$160,000 for the lease, which Diane already outlined, each funder also contributes to core costs of an agency, such as audit, insurance, bookkeeping and so forth. That, for us, is another \$30,000 that needs to be extricated from our other programs, and usually when that happens, you have a longer-term plan in place. You know something is coming to an end. In our case, we don't know that.

•(1025)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Earlier, you addressed the issue of equipment that you had bought through funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Now, you say that you have to return it. Can you explain that?

[English]

Ms. Marion Newrick: In the form letter we received, there is an indication that all equipment needs to be disposed of according to Treasury Board rules. Usually what happens is that CIC quite often sends other still-funded settlement agencies to go through your furniture and take what they need. In actual fact, what will happen in our case is that we were provided with new equipment by CIC. All of these agencies over the years have had those items purchased. We fill out every year a form that says what was purchased, and they have the right to come and take that back.

We're saying that as charitable agencies, they're leaving us with an empty shell. We still have the cost of the lease on our backs. We have to cover that, but it will be an empty shell because the furniture that we used to have was disposed of.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: You're saying that, even if you find sources of funding elsewhere to continue operations, you would lose your equipment. Which would mean that you are back where you started. You could not operate any more.

[English]

Ms. Diane Walter: Yes, that's right.

Ms. Marion Newrick: That's correct.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: I understand that this is normal procedure. When Citizenship and Immigration Canada told you that the funding would cease, did you receive formal notice saying so?

They told us a little earlier that they wanted to limit the burden associated with the transition imposed on agencies providing services. Perhaps they will at least be open and let you have your equipment so that you can continue to operate. Did they give you a formal notice indicating that they wanted to recuperate the equipment at that point?

[English]

Ms. Marion Newrick: It was only a sentence in a stamped form letter. So we got the form letter in December, which was a stamped signature, and that was just one of the generic sentences that was included. I can certainly get you a copy of that letter.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Yes, that would be appreciated. You can give it to the clerk.

So it was part of the letter telling you that your funding would not be renewed. It wasn't in the original form you made the request in.

[English]

Ms. Marion Newrick: It was in the letter that we received in December, yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Ms. Woodbeck, what does it mean for your agency?

[English]

Ms. Cathy Woodbeck: We are looking at about a 15% cut from our budget of past years. It's about a 30% cut from what we had proposed to expand across northwestern Ontario. There are communities that have no service whatsoever, and we had proposed to do some video conferencing, teleconferencing, or at least have toll-free access to some of the communities, which we now can't do. So it was less than what we had last year. We had a teleconference of northern agencies just recently and looked at the cuts. They were anywhere from 5% to about 25%, and in a small agency a cut of 25% is going to have a huge impact.

For our agency, it means that one program will disappear completely, so one staff member will be gone, and two others who work part time in outreach and promotion. We really don't have anyone in a full-time capacity. There are not a lot of staff. They're mostly half-time and part-time to about seven full-time equivalent. When a program goes, then a part-time staff goes. They're often folks who have one or two other jobs and are trying to make ends meet, so it's particularly difficult. We have former newcomers, who are now Canadian citizens, working in our agency. It's particularly difficult to have to lay someone off who was working part time with you in these programs.

So we will have, I believe, three staff positions that we won't be able to continue, one entire program gone, and approximately a 15% cut to our budget. We'll have to fund that somehow through fundraising or whatever, which is also difficult in a smaller community where you have less to draw on, as far as fundraising. There are not a lot of foundations and other funding sources to pick up the slack.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Chow.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Ms. Newrick, especially with your agencies incurring that debt, have you thought of doing a collective lawsuit? Your agency and other agencies signed leases based on a commitment from CIC that they would provide funding. That's why you moved into a new site, or the Afghan organization incurred debt, and now you can't get out of the lease. That's technically the government's responsibility, so have you thought of trying to take some kind of legal action? It's not fair for a small agency to be saddled with a debt of that size. I've heard that many other agencies are experiencing the same thing.

The absurd thing is that last year or the year before, they provided funding to buy new equipment and find new sites. The agencies were encouraged to expand. They got the funding, and now—bang—it's gone. In my mind, that's really poor planning.

Putting aside all the politics, have you considered legal action of any kind?

Ms. Marion Newrick: We were actually approached by a lawyer from an administrative law firm. They feel that we have a very strong case. We're going to meet with them next week just to get some information. We have made no decisions at this point, and it hasn't gone to our boards yet, but they want to provide us with the options.

Ms. Olivia Chow: How closely are you working with OCASI to map out...? I imagine you would deal with the GTA or city of Toronto ones. I've seen Peel, Guelph, and Thunder Bay on the list—all across Ontario. How involved is OCASI in trying to assist?

Ms. Marion Newrick: OCASI called a meeting in January, and mostly the Toronto-area agencies met. They're doing as much as they can behind the scenes and writing to the minister. It was very hard for them to get any information. They requested certain information that has not yet been provided, such as the assessment tool that was used. I don't have that at my fingertips, but I can forward it to you.

This is bigger than OCASI, because there are many programs and services that are not OCASI members, such as school boards, hospitals, that are being cut. So I think something bigger needs to be done. It's not just the OCASI-based agencies; it impacts on the greater community as well.

Ms. Olivia Chow: You estimated that about 1,000 workers are being eliminated, that their jobs are being eliminated, and the fact is that there is no severance package or transition plan. In a small agency, certainly, once you shut down, you don't even have funding to pay the debts, never mind the packages.

Has anyone collectively figured out how much that would require in order to deal with it? Is that being calculated? I imagine that CIC would have that information, I suppose....

Ms. Marion Newrick: I think at this point we just don't know. There hasn't been time to even begin to address that, because there are so many things we're trying to deal with at the same time. CIC has made it clear that they are not responsible for any wind-down costs and they are not going to help us with any wind-down costs. That's the message that came to us: we're the employer, we're the ones who hold the leases, and it's our responsibility.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I see. So they're washing their hands of it—

Ms. Marion Newrick: Yes.

Ms. Olivia Chow: —including the clients.

Ms. Diane Walter: I just need to say that agencies have been scrambling in the last month or so to get their charges, just to get some sense of what...of how to go forward. You talk about a lawsuit. We were approached by a lawyer, but we're really still sort of shell-shocked by this decision because there's absolutely no rationale for their decision. So we're still trying to get our charges....

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes.

Some of the administrators, the CIC staff, said, well, they should know it's coming, because it's merit based, some agencies have been warned, they know that some are not performing well, and they would have received information.

That's the sort of the answer we've been provided. I don't think that is correct. Could you describe what happened?

• (1035)

Ms. Diane Walter: Marion can probably speak more eloquently to this, as she is the ED of the agency, but I know that most agencies exceeded their targets. I know that our agency in particular exceeded our target, and other agencies that were—

Ms. Olivia Chow: You mean targets for numbers you've served.

Ms. Diane Walter: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I asked this question today to the staff: what is the total number of people being impacted? Because you do submit the target numbers, right? So it's clear that they do have that number; it's just that they won't provide it to us.

Ms. Diane Walter: That data is collected. It's very onerous. They're very micro-management in their approach....

Ms. Olivia Chow: They have that data.

Ms. Diane Walter: They have that data. They can churn it out.

Ms. Olivia Chow: So on the target numbers, you exceeded the targets and yet you're still being cut.

Ms. Marion Newrick: If I may, I'll just say that in actual fact, before the year begins we have to give them the numbers of clients that we intend to serve, in both individual and group services. We submit that. CIC signs off on it and sends it back to us. That's our legal contract. We exceeded our targets. We had exceeded our annual targets by December of this year, so essentially, for January, February, and March of this year, we could have sat back, done nothing, and still have fulfilled all of our contract obligations.

Ms. Olivia Chow: So on the number of 100,000, there are grounds for that number? Because I've heard that number being talked about. Would that be the ballpark number? Or don't we know?

Ms. Marion Newrick: I mean, the thing is that it's so difficult for us to get that information. CIC doesn't help us. They don't provide us with the information. There's no central source to collect it. All we're doing is kind of estimating from average numbers in agencies what we know, and then trying to expand that out from agencies and programs that we haven't yet heard from. Somebody needs to collect this information. We can't do it, but CIC should be doing it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dykstra.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Thank you, Chair.

Marion, I just wanted to ask a couple of follow-up questions. I certainly know that these decisions and the ramifications of the decisions are not easy for any of the three of you here today, that despite what was indicated earlier from the opposition.... The decisions and the work you've done in terms of applying and working...these are strictly ministry work. You haven't met on a regular basis with any members of Parliament on the government side or been told directly by the ministry it doesn't want to fund your organization...?

Ms. Marion Newrick: Sir, I couldn't hear because of the noise. Would you mind repeating the last part of the question?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Sure.

Listen, all I want to do is make it clear that there's an attempt here to politicize this, and I don't think that's helpful to your organizations, I don't think it's helpful to this process, I don't think it's helpful to the settlement program across the country.

Nobody sitting on this side of the committee table and on the side of government wants to see agencies hurt, but there is an overall responsibility to try to deliver services as best and as well as the ministry can to as many organizations and thereby to as many individuals as possible.

I just wanted to make the point that I know the three of you are here, and it's difficult to sit here and talk about the future of your organizations, but we do have a responsibility from an overall perspective to implement the plan, and this is the way the ministry has recommended we move forward.

I do want to ask a bit of a detailed question. We all have offices that we rent and lease agreements that we sign. All of them indicate that we can be terminated upon not winning an election; therefore, they get paid their 90 days or 60 days, but that would be it. Are you telling me that you actually receive permanent funding from the

ministry, and now you're applying for...what you applied for was yearly funding?

Ms. Marion Newrick: I'd first respond to your first point, about it not being a political process.

Our agencies are working in the community, and we do turn to our elected representatives—as does everybody in their riding—for help to understand what is happening. We were not afforded any information on where this decision came from. There was no plan. It was a political decision.

If this government had indications that they were going to do this, they should have communicated that to us a long time ago. This should not have just been thrown at us at the last minute.

• (1040)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: When you applied for funding for this year, you weren't told that there was a chance you wouldn't be funded? You were told that you were going to be funded?

Ms. Marion Newrick: We weren't able to present all of our brief because of lack of time, but we went through a long process of attending information meetings with CIC staff. There were online resources for us. And yes, we knew we were going into a new phase of funding.

I would like to read to you one of the things that was said at the information session and is still available online.

With this CFP, we are trying to adopt a principle of inclusion, whereby every proposal possible gets assessed on the merits of the project being proposed, as opposed to evaluating your proposal-writing skills. In other words, CIC Settlement Ontario Region is not looking for the first excuse to screen an applicant out. If you can get the basic required documentation of the CFP in by the deadline (see checklist) and provide information on the project you propose CIC will make the effort to contact you for additional details as required before making any decision on whether to proceed with funding or not.

The new Modernized Approach to Settlement Programming offers you the opportunity to design your "ideal" program, including new staff. In essence, you tell us what you'd like to do and what you think it will cost, and we'll consider it for funding.

Going through that whole process, this is what we were hearing from staff. We were told that no agency would be cut unless there were performance issues, which would have been identified through the normal channels.

When this decision came down, it was like being hit from behind with a baseball bat. None of us expected it.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I think it's fair to say that no one anticipates receiving a funding cut, but I think the letter also indicates that there is a potential, if the project doesn't meet the criteria, that there won't be funding for it.

Ms. Marion Newrick: That may have been, but the same services that we're currently providing will still be needed after March 31. There has been no change in the needs of newcomers in our community.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I wanted to ask you, Mr. Gomez, in response to the call for proposal, did the organization request funding for the labour market access program?

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes.

By the way, I'm not the person who is responsible for submitting the responses to calls for proposals.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Well, you're here speaking on behalf of the organization.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes I am, so I'll do my best to answer your question. I'm just not completely aware of all things.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Okay. But there was no request made for the language instruction for newcomers to Canada program, and there was no request for the enhanced language training in their submission.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes. This—

Mr. Rick Dykstra: So you actually only applied for one of the three services you currently provide.

Mr. Colin Gomez: By “you”, you mean the organization?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Sorry, I mean the organization.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Yes, that mistake was made in the process.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: I see.

Mr. Colin Gomez: My understanding—if I could address that, because I had some conversation with our executive director before I left, which we all felt was necessary—was that she was confused by the significant change in the process of application. It was, of course, significantly different from anything we'd done before. That was part of the new initiative.

I understood that myself, but I wasn't part of the process, so....

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Right, but it's fair to say that whether the director was confused, or whether the board was unsure, they could have met with officials. Officials from the ministry are in fact sitting down with you right now, even though the application wasn't made, in an attempt to try to work with you on this process.

Mr. Colin Gomez: Well, as I understand it, we would have hoped, the mistake having been made, that there might have been a chance to correct that in time. But in fact it seemed like the wheels were turning as if everyone assumed that the application had been made properly. Then suddenly it became obvious that it hadn't, and it was too late.

That was the impression I got from the executive director. She felt

Mr. Rick Dykstra: The impression I had from the ministry was that two-thirds of the services delivered by the organization were not applied for.

Mr. Colin Gomez: They were not applied for by the June deadline, that's right. Instead, by the—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Dykstra, the time has expired—for the committee, actually.

Mr. Wrzesnewskij has put me on notice that he wishes to have a point of order.

•(1045)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): No questions, or is it just...?

The Chair: I know everybody has questions, but we have about a minute left, and you told me you had a point of order.

You have one too.

Everybody has a point of order.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: It was referenced earlier that we'd like to request a list of all the agencies that had cuts, and the amounts that were cut.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, but I will do it. I will direct the clerk to Ms. Tapley, who is the associate assistant deputy minister. We will ask her if she has that information.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: If they could provide that by Friday, that would be tremendous.

The Chair: We will ask for that as well.

Mr. Oliphant, do you have a point of order?

Mr. Robert Oliphant: It may be a point of privilege.

The government members seem to have information about perhaps confidential conversations between agencies and government officials that we're not privy to. As parliamentarians, we would like to have all the information that other committee members have regarding what is going on in those agencies.

So I would like you to ask the ministry staff for a status update on the negotiations going on currently, because they obviously know about meetings taking place and those kinds of things. They're not part of the government—they're backbenchers—so I think all backbenchers should have the same amount of information.

The Chair: I'm a backbencher and I don't know, and it's not a point of order.

Ms. Chow, do you have a point of order?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Yes, it's a follow-up. You heard my question to the staff—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: It's not a point of privilege.

Ms. Chow has the floor.

Ms. Olivia Chow: I'm wondering whether you can entertain my request for the number of newcomers affected, number of staff cut, debt incurred at agencies, assessment tools used, and formula used to determine funding to each region.

I raised it when I was asking them, and they said they would provide it, but I just want to make sure it's formal and in front of you.

The Chair: I don't think that's a point of order either, but I will ask the clerk to request that information.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Oliphant has another point of order.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I think it's a point of privilege.

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: It's a point of parliamentary privilege. There is information that some members of the committee have and others don't. It's not in the newspapers; it's government knowledge.

I really do think that for us to work as a committee, we do need to have equal footing on information. If a Privy Council officer had it, it would be different than if it were not a Privy Council officer.

So I do request that we get an update on all negotiations going on between the government and the agencies, whether they're getting an increase or a decrease in funding.

The Chair: Well, that's the same point that you raised before. I said it was not a point of privilege.

I also informed you that, as you know, I'm a backbencher, and I don't know the information that you're requesting. I haven't got that impression—

Mr. Justin Trudeau: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...backbencher right there—

The Chair: I am a backbencher, and I haven't—

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau: No. You're not a privy councillor.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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