



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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HUMA • NUMBER 004 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, October 6, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki**



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** We'll get started. I want to advise everyone that today we're going to have officials from three different departments with us at one time, as opposed to in different panels. In the event that questions may relate one to the other, it'll be much easier to handle. With us today we have the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Department of Health. Each will be making a presentation.

You have the opening remarks by the departments of human resources and citizenship and immigration. If any remarks from the Department of Health come along, we'll distribute those before its representative starts speaking. We will then have seven-minute rounds, as we're doing the one panel over the two hours. So your time will be not five but seven minutes. Keep that in mind.

I'll ask the department of human resources to start first. Is that the way we're going to go?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue (Director General, Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development):** That's correct.

**The Chair:** Okay. Then when you're done we'll proceed to the next department.

After you've all completed your remarks, we'll go to the rounds of questioning.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and distinguished members of this committee.

[Translation]

My name is Jean-François LaRue and I am the Director General of the Labour Market Integration Directorate, within the Skills and Employment Branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. I am accompanied by Mr. Jonathan Wells who is the Director of Operations.

On behalf of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development, I would like to extend my thanks to the committee for the opportunity to contribute to your study on foreign credential recognition.

[English]

This afternoon I would like to provide the committee with a brief overview of the important work that HRSDC's foreign credential recognition program, or FCRP, has been doing to improve the labour market outcomes of foreign trained individuals. In doing so I will focus on the implementation of the pan-Canadian framework and describe some of the areas where we've seen significant progress.

The process for the recognition of credentials is complex, costly, and lengthy, with nearly 500 regulatory bodies in Canada, five recognized credential assessment agencies—and there are even more—and numerous professional associations, post-secondary and vocational institutions, and employers throughout 13 jurisdictions. This complex environment ultimately means that many internationally trained workers are often working in survival jobs and not necessarily in jobs commensurate with their skills and experience.

[Translation]

To address these issues, first ministers agreed to take concerted action by tasking labour market ministers to develop a pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications.

[English]

Launched in 2009 and led by HRSDC, the framework is a public commitment that establishes a shared national vision and guiding principles to improve the labour market integration of internationally trained workers. Through the framework, regulators and stakeholders are working with governments to ensure that the processes used to assess foreign qualifications adhere to the framework's principles of fairness, consistency, transparency, and timeliness.

Given the broad scope of the work, governments agreed to target two sets of priority occupations—and 14 in total—over three years for individual and collective actions. Among others, targeted occupations include engineers, nurses, dentists, and physicians.

Through national consultation, we're proud to acknowledge that regulatory authorities for the first set of eight target occupations are currently meeting the pan-Canadian commitment to timely service. This means that internationally trained individuals in these occupations are informed within one year whether their qualifications will be recognized, whether they need to meet additional requirements necessary for registration, or whether they may consider a related occupation commensurate with their skills and experience.

We should take a moment here to note that, although FCR is largely an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the federal government is playing a leadership and facilitative role by working closely with provincial and territorial governments to implement the framework. To do this, we've taken a number of concrete actions, such as building capacity among provincial and territorial governments, supporting stakeholders through projects that improve FCR processes, facilitating national coordination among key players, and helping individuals with information and targeted financial support.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Fundamental to these efforts is the close relationship that has been developed with our federal counterparts, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Health Canada. HRSDC's role focuses on overcoming systemic barriers, meaning we work with the stakeholders to foster the development of nationally consistent FCR tools and approaches.

I will let my colleagues from the other two departments explain their role themselves, but there is quite a basic distinction here: the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development works mainly with Canadian systems to attempt to correct the problems that exist.

[English]

The framework is being delivered through HRSDC's foreign credential recognition program. The program has also been providing since 2003 strategic financial support to key stakeholders, such as regulatory authorities, to enable them to develop processes and practices that are consistent with the principles of the pan-Canadian framework.

[Translation]

The program has played an important role in facilitating the emergence of pan-Canadian partnerships. Since its inception, the FCR Program has funded 160 projects worth more than \$90 million, including seven provincial and territorial agreements to fund the creation of systems and tools to recognize foreign credentials.

[English]

For instance, with assistance from the FCR program, the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation is implementing a national process for the assessment of foreign credentials whereby internationally trained dentists, if successful in the assessment, will be eligible to take the national exam without additional skills upgrading. This is quite a change from the past, when the answer was usually to go back to a formal training program of two years. This is quite a departure and quite an achievement.

The program has also supported numerous sector councils to enable employers to assess the tools they need facilitate FCR. Our partnership with BioTalent is one such success story.

BioTalent Canada is working to connect internationally trained individuals with potential employers. It works closely with industry to identify the specific essential skills and competencies required in Canada's bio-economy, which also includes the field of medical laboratory sciences. Through the BioSkills recognition program, immigrants or Canadians educated abroad who are found ineligible

for certification as medical laboratory technologists have the opportunity to put their skills to use in a related field. This type of project provides internationally trained individuals with alternative career opportunities that appropriately reflect their skills and experience.

Since the beginning of my remarks, I have underlined the expression "internationally trained individuals", which also covers Canadians educated abroad who may return to Canada for employment.

[Translation]

Furthermore, the FCR program is funding partners to reduce barriers faced by Canadians as they move across provinces and by internationally trained workers who are trying to integrate into the Canadian economy.

Recent improvements to the Agreement on Internal Trade state that workers certified for a regulated occupation in one province or territory can, upon application, be certified for that occupation anywhere in Canada without any additional material training, experience or assessments. As a result, skilled immigrants and all Canadians are able to access opportunities across the country.

[English]

In our discussion with various stakeholders, we often heard about the financial difficulties that foreign-trained workers face when seeking to have their credentials recognized. This is a particular challenge for them because their lack of Canadian credit history and work experience can discourage Canadian financial institutions from providing them with loans. Recognizing this, the federal government introduced in Budget 2011 a complementary financial assistance pilot project initiative proposing to help foreign trained workers cover the costs associated with the FCR process.

In summary, national consultations with stakeholders validated that not only are systems for assessment and recognition of foreign credentials complex, lengthy, and costly, but also that those organizations responsible for these systems have a limited capacity on top of daily business to address these issues in their entirety. Common key messages delivered at these meetings identified a need for more pre-arrival supports, more competency-based assessment tools, sustainable and accessible bridging programs, increased availability of supervised work placement, and financial support for individuals and employers.

As I outlined a few moments ago, significant work has already been undertaken, but continued support is required. To maintain the momentum, all governments and key stakeholders—that is, all of the players that we have on the ice—must commit to ongoing collaboration, build upon successes and lessons learned, and continue to take concerted actions beyond 2012.

Clearly, we think we have the right approach. It is critical, I insist, that we continue building on the key partnerships that we have developed with all priority occupations. This is the key to our long-term success going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1540)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that presentation.

We'll now continue with CIC.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman (Acting Director General, Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My name is Natasha Pateman and I am the Acting Director General of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, or FCRO, at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide an overview on initiatives the FCRO has underway that are helping internationally trained individuals better integrate the Canadian labour market.

[*English*]

Attracting and retaining the best talent to address existing and future labour market challenges is critical to Canada's capacity to adjust to market cycles and to sustain longer-term economic success. As you know, immigration inflows are a crucial source of population growth and are fast becoming a critical source of skilled labour in Canada. Current projections estimate that by 2016, immigration will contribute to all net labour force growth in Canada, as the number of individuals leaving the workforce—from retirements, for example—is expected to exceed the number of new entrants from the Canadian educational system.

Over the past few years, Canada has been increasing its immigration levels as one way of addressing this upcoming labour shortage. In 2010 alone, Canada accepted approximately 119,000 federal skilled workers and 36,000 provincial nominees. However, although Canada accepted a record number of immigrants last year—more than 280,000—all of us are aware of the difficulties that many internationally trained individuals face when entering the Canadian labour market—

**The Chair:** Can I just interrupt for the moment? If you could, perhaps just slow down your reading a bit. The reason, of course, is that the translator needs to—

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** I'm sorry. I'm always a fast talker. Everybody's always telling me—

**The Chair:** —be able to hear and understand. If you can slow down a bit, we'd appreciate it.

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** Absolutely.

All of us are aware of the difficulties that many internationally trained individuals face when entering the Canadian labour market in finding jobs that match their skills and experience levels.

[*Translation*]

Recognizing the complexity of the FCR process and the need to improve labour market outcomes of skilled immigrants, the Government of Canada established the Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) in May 2007, with a mandate to provide internationally trained individuals with the information, path-finding and referral services they need to have their credentials assessed and recognized as quickly as possible and find work in their field of expertise.

[*English*]

Internationally trained individuals need to have their credentials recognized in Canada by the licensing bodies that regulate professions and trades, or by employers who hire workers in non-regulated occupations. We know that immigrants who have their credentials assessed and recognized within their first year of landing experience better labour market outcomes and have a greater chance of finding jobs that match their skills and experience. The longer immigrants stay away from their profession, the less likely they are to gain employment within their field. Moving quickly through the FCR and licensure process is critical to preventing skills atrophy and to ensuring that immigrants can quickly contribute to Canada's economic prosperity.

To help with this, the FCRO collaborates with federal partners, such as HRSDC and Health Canada, the provinces and territories, regulatory bodies, credential assessment agencies, industry associations, and employers to offer services in Canada and overseas.

One area of such collaboration is the pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications. The FCRO has been supporting the development and implementation of the framework since 2009, with a particular emphasis on improving pre-arrival information supports.

In addition to the provision of innovative counselling abroad, the FCRO, together with other governments and key partners, has provided contribution funding to a variety of stakeholders, including the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, to explore and develop overseas tools, services, and strategies such as online self-assessment modules, mentoring initiatives, and employer recruitment of internationally trained individuals.

•(1545)

[Translation]

Projects like these help immigrants start as many steps as they can in having their credentials recognized before arriving in Canada, which makes them more likely to have greater success in finding jobs that match their skills and experience sooner.

[English]

Another significant initiative to support immigrants so that they can hit the ground running once they arrive in Canada is the Canadian immigrant integration program, or CIIP. In October 2010, the FCRO took over the responsibility for the CIIP from HRSDC and expanded its reach and services. This program is delivered in partnership with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and provides federal skilled workers and provincial nominees, as well as their spouses and working-age dependents, with a two-day orientation session to the labour market and FCR processes in Canada. Immigrants who participate in these sessions receive individual counselling and develop action plans that prepare them for their settlement post-landing. CIIP services are offered in Manila, Philippines; Guangzhou, China; New Delhi, India; and London, United Kingdom. And satellite services are available to Southeast Asia, northern Europe, and the Persian Gulf. By having the CIIP located in these four countries, the FCRO can potentially reach 75% of federal skilled workers and 44% of provincial nominee applicants in up to 25 countries.

As of June 2011, nearly 19,000 internationally trained individuals had registered for CIIP services, and over 13,000 had completed the two-day information session. Preliminary results indicate a marked improvement in labour market outcomes of those who participated in the CIIP sessions overseas. For example, a survey of the CIIP conducted in September 2010 found that of the 1,051 graduates in Canada, 62% found employment in the first six months after arrival. The survey also found that CIIP participants who followed their individual job search plans were more likely to find work within their area of specialization.

Additional services and tools for internationally trained individuals at both the pre- and post-arrival phase include our website, [www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca), which has products such as *Planning to work in Canada? An essential workbook for newcomers*, a step-by-step guide that helps prospective or recently arrived newcomers gather information about living and working in Canada. *The Employer's Roadmap to Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers* is a guide for employers in small to medium size businesses interested in hiring internationally trained individuals. As of August 31, 2011, the FCRO website had received over 1.9 million visits, an increase of over 42% from last year.

Furthermore, information services at more than 245 outreach sites and over 320 Service Canada centres help internationally trained individuals navigate the FCR process. To date, Service Canada has received over 100,000 in-person visits and 10,000 calls requesting information on regulated and non-regulated occupations, the trades, and the services provided by FCRO.

[Translation]

In addition to these supports, the FCRO also promotes discussion and information-sharing amongst stakeholders who are responsible for assessing, licensing and hiring internationally trained individuals.

This fall, the International Qualifications Network (IQN) will be launched and will provide a one-stop information site for foreign credential recognition activities which afford employers, government, immigrant service providers, regulatory bodies and academics the opportunity to uphold and share best practices and use this information for their own needs.

[English]

The FCRO's information products are important tools that help internationally trained individuals understand the FCR process. But gaining Canadian work experience is a significant hurdle for many immigrants trying to integrate into the labour market. One way the Government of Canada has responded to this challenge has been by creating the federal internship for newcomers program, or FIN. Delivered through the FCRO in partnership with HRSDC and other federal departments and agencies, the FIN program is an innovative initiative that provides qualified newcomers at both entry and mid-career levels with an opportunity to acquire temporary work experience within the federal public service in fields relevant to their education and skills levels.

In addition to the FIN program, CIC is partnering with three immigrant-serving organizations in Ottawa, Toronto, and Calgary to launch a public service mentoring pilot program for newcomers. It's expected to be in place this fall. Through this initiative, newcomers will be matched with public servants in their respective profession or occupation with a view to expanding their professional networks, furthering their awareness and understanding of the Canadian workplace, and enhancing their career objectives and employment search strategies.

•(1550)

[Translation]

In closing, although foreign credential recognition remains a challenge for many immigrants trying to enter the Canadian labour market, federal, provincial and federal organizations are working together and making progress towards minimizing the barriers faced when trying to find employment in Canada. More needs to be done to simplify the process and improve labour market outcomes, which is why the FCRO is focusing on providing information and supports to internationally trained workers as early as possible in the immigration process.

[English]

Internationally trained individuals have a key role to play in Canada's economic prosperity, both now and in the future, which is why it is so important that they fully utilize their skills, education, and experience as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I hope this has provided you with a helpful overview of the work of the FCRO.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Pateman. I'm sure there will be some questions flowing from that.

As we turn to Ms. Craig Garrison, I might just add that we don't have your notes distributed. I understand the interpreters have them, but just keep in mind that if you could slow up a bit, it makes it a lot easier for the interpreters. So take your time as you go through them. We have lots of time.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison (Director, Health Human Resources Policy Division, Department of Health):** Thank you, and good afternoon, everyone. I apologize that you do not have my comments in front of you. I will take the chair's advice and try to speak more slowly.

My name is Margo Craig Garrison. I'm the director of health human resources policy at Health Canada.

On behalf of Health Canada, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to contribute to your study today. I will focus my remarks on Health Canada's contributions to improving foreign qualification recognition, first by providing some context to my remarks and then some examples of the department's participation and accomplishments.

The recognition of foreign qualifications is important for the health workforce. Internationally educated health professionals, or IEHPs, continue to grow in number and as a proportion of their respective workforces. For example, the Canadian Institute of Health Information reports that international medical graduates, or IMGs, increased by over 14% between 2005 and 2009 and represented 23.4% of the total physician workforce in 2009. Over the same period, internationally educated nurses increased by almost 15% to represent 8.3% of the total registered nursing workforce.

Despite the significance of IEHPs in the health workforce, it is well documented that these professionals face challenges during their path to workplace integration, such as navigating the steps to licensure; their language and communication skills; and their lack of familiarity with and experience in the Canadian health care system.

In 2003, Canada's first ministers made a commitment to work together to secure and maintain a stable and optimal health workforce in Canada. In 2004, first ministers adopted a 10-year plan to strengthen health care and respond to concerns around timely access to quality care for all Canadians. A key part of the plan focused on increasing the supply of health professionals, in part by accelerating and expanding the assessment and integration of internationally trained health care graduates.

In support of the 10-year plan, in its 2005 budget the Government of Canada committed \$75 million over five years to the internationally educated health professionals initiative or IEHPI. We are pleased to say that the IEHPI was renewed in 2010.

Currently, the initiative has an ongoing funding base of \$18 million per year.

The goal of the initiative is to address barriers and to advance progress in areas related to the integration of internationally educated health professionals. In practical terms, this means working to improve access to credential assessment and verification, and increasing the availability of training, orientation, and other supports to facilitate integration into the workforce.

Since 2005, investments under the IEHPI have focused on seven priority occupations: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory technologists, and medical radiation technologists. These IEHPI priority occupations align well with the priority occupations targeted for FQR framework implementation.

Approximately 140 projects have been completed or are currently being supported by the IEHPI funding. To provide a few examples of Health Canada's investment, funding has been provided to the Atlantic provinces at \$1.2 million over four years. The provinces have partnered to develop self-assessment tools for several professions including licensed practical nurses, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists. These online tools help IEHPs identify whether they have the knowledge and skills needed to work in Canada. By using these tools online, immigrants can access them prior to coming to Canada and therefore be better informed about Canadian practice requirements.

With \$7.3 million over five years, the Government of British Columbia is supporting the workplace integration and retention of IEHPs through the development and implementation of courses that help IEHPs improve their communication skills, as well as a course that helps employers identify and deal with communication challenges. Additionally, B.C. will improve consistency across their bridging programs.

● (1555)

The Medical Council of Canada's national assessment approach for IMGs is receiving \$110,000 over two years for the common assessment tool the council created to determine IMGs' preparedness for entry into first-year medical residency training. Discussions are now under way to explore whether this tool can be used as part of a common national assessment process for physicians who arrive in Canada practice-ready. And Quebec's

[Translation]

Department of Health and Social Services

[English]

is providing \$6.4 million over three years to help remove barriers for IMGs and other IEHPs.

In addition to aligning IEHPI's investments with the priority outcomes identified in the framework, Health Canada has been an active participant on the FQR Working Group, which manages this initiative during the first phase of analysis and action planning for the five health occupations selected from among the first eight for FQR implementation.

Building on these successes, governments are leading work on the second set of six priority occupations, four of which are health-related, including physicians.

Health Canada is pleased to act as the co-chair with the Province of Alberta on the Physician Task Team, and is also an active contributor to the work under way with the other health-related occupations.

Health Canada's support for the successful implementation of the FQR framework is not limited to funding provincial and territorial governments and national stakeholders. Health Canada is the co-chair of the federal-provincial-territorial advisory committee on health delivery and human resources. HRSDC is represented as a member of that committee. The ACHDHR has established an internationally educated health professionals task force, which is co-chaired by Health Canada and the Province of British Columbia. The task force identifies the impacts of the framework on health ministries across the country and works towards addressing common policy issues.

As federal partners in foreign qualification recognition, both CIC and HRSDC are invited to Health Canada-organized meetings. We truly are cooperating among ourselves.

After six years of the successful implementation of the IEHPI, Health Canada is revising its policy agenda in collaboration with partners. Among the principal issues going forward are workplace integration issues. These continue to be a challenge, particularly language and communication skills and alternative careers. Health Canada is continuing to work collaboratively with all of our partners, including the regulatory authorities, the professional associations, and others to facilitate implementation of the framework.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Health Canada is playing a key role in addressing some of the most complex challenges in foreign qualification recognition and has been instrumental in engaging a wider network of government ministries, organizations, and others who are dedicating their time and effort to improving FQR in Canada. These broad partnerships are essential to the continued success of the framework.

Thank you, Mr. Chair

•(1600)

**The Chair:** Thank you for that informative presentation.

Perhaps the clerk could circulate your notes among the members, whenever she is able to.

With that, we'll move to our first seven-minute round of questioning, starting with Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Thank you for coming in.

I must admit, with all the acronyms being thrown around, I'm a bit befuddled by the alphabet soup we've been subjected to. I would appreciate seeing Health Canada's notes. I think they would help.

I have all kinds of questions, but I'm going to start with one for HRSDC.

On page 4 of your brief, you indicated that "the Agreement on Internal Trade states that workers certified for a regulated occupation in one province or territory can...be certified...".

I understand that the AIT has to do with labour mobility. There are many occupations that have different regulations in different provinces. I'm not going to name them all, but certainly teachers and social workers come to mind. I believe teachers were mentioned somewhere in one of these documents.

How does that work for foreign credentials? Say somebody was a teacher and had credentials in one province but there were different rules in other provinces. In fact, Canadian-trained teachers run into that all the time. I was just speaking to somebody yesterday who was trained in B.C. and is trying to find work in Ontario, and this person has to go through this credential process. How does that apply to foreign workers?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Thank you very much for your questions.

Very simply put, once individuals who come to this country are certified in one province, they will be capable of being certified in another jurisdiction they apply to, without any additional material, examination or tests. So they will be entitled to full mobility.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** To use the example of Alberta—though I don't have the differences off the top of my head—I know that it has quite a different standard for social workers than Ontario does.

So if a social worker were accepted as credentialed in Alberta, which has quite a different standard than Ontario, am I understanding you to say they would then be able to work in Ontario, even though the credentialing system there is completely different?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I'm going to use a couple of technical terms here, and you might want to slow me down when I explain this. It's a bit of the reverse onus principle. For many years we tried to have, per occupation, mutual recognition agreements between the occupations across provinces. These processes were fairly intense and convoluted, and were not producing the results we were expecting.

With the reverse onus principle, what we've essentially said is that for regulated occupations, you have full mobility in any occupation, except for a process of transparency called the posting of exceptions. If a provincial government or regulatory agency can convince other provincial governments that, frankly, the standards are so different that there is a material difference between their standards, it can require you to post an exception. It's called supplementary measures or additional measures.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Am I understanding then that it's up to the provinces to apply for that exception?



•(1605)

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Well, there is a process where the regulatory bodies will discuss with the provinces the need for posting an exception. What you need to know is that this exception process is not an easy grab; you can't post an exception because you feel like it. It will be assessed on whether or not the difference is material enough. For instance, if you come in and you tell me you have a first-aid course and you think it's material enough for us to post an exception, we're going to look at it very critically. But if the difference is in terms of a course that's fundamental to the occupation, we're certainly going to recognize that difference. Today, there are about thirty-some exceptions that have been posted.

Let me give you an example that is easy to understand. For lawyers, all provinces have posted an exception against Quebec because of the difference between the civil law and common law. I think intuitively that this is because the fundamental differences between the two systems required an exception. You could apply that to the other professions. So if a profession doesn't feel that it has a fundamental requirement, the main benefit of posting exceptions is simply transparency. What we're telling Canadian workers and people who would like to work in another province is that unless there is a posted exception for their profession, they have access to full labour mobility.

That's quite an achievement, considering how long we've been dealing with this issue.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** To clarify this, when you say Canadian workers, we currently have a situation where some Canadian-trained workers need to go through a different process when they want to work in a different province. Teachers are a good example. Canadian-trained teachers' qualifications aren't necessarily recognized from province to province, but my understanding of what you're saying is that for people who have their foreign credentials recognized, this will not apply to them once they are credentialed in one province.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Once they are credentialed in one province, they are automatically allowed, upon application, to be certified in any other province across the country.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Okay.

On page 4 of your brief, you also mentioned sector councils: "The program has also supported numerous sector councils...". We've heard recently that sector council funding is being cut and, probably, eventually eliminated. I understand there's going to be another process.

What plans do you have in place, because it seems to me that the sector councils are an important part of this? You talk about their enabling employers to access the tools, and so on. How is that relationship going to change if the sector councils are no longer in place? What mechanisms are you going to use to make sure that the information is available?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Obviously, I'm not privy to what's going to happen to sector councils specifically. We do have many activities that we think are very valuable and important. It's our main tool for working with employers. As I'm indicating on sector councils, we have to see what form these new entities are going to take as we go forward. We have a lot of activities with them, four or

five that we particularly like. For example, in the telecommunications sector, we have contracts with tourism, we have projects also with BioTalent Canada, and with ECO Canada for green jobs. You've mentioned them already.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is actually up.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** I'm out of time? That was a fast seven minutes.

**The Chair:** We'll move to Ms. Leitch.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you very much, everyone, for attending today. I greatly appreciate the time you've taken and efforts you've made to put together some material for us. It is extremely helpful.

I have some questions for each one of the groups on the panel.

Starting with HRSDC, Monsieur LaRue, what do you anticipate will be happening after 2012 with respect to the pan-Canadian framework? We do have a set timeframe and, obviously, have moved some professions through this process, but December 31, 2012, will be upon us soon enough.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Thank you very much for your question.

Maybe looking back a little bit, a couple of months ago when we established a list of 14 priority occupations, nine of which were in the health sector, we had those target groups divided into two groups. The first group of eight targeted occupations was scheduled to be streamlined by December 2010. The work is done, and all those occupations meet the one-year time service standard.

Now we have another group of six priority occupations scheduled for December 2012. We're right in the midst of working with those occupations. We are meeting with them, doing national consultations, and through those national consultations we are trying to identify and really understand in-depth their certification processes. And we're working with the provinces in doing that.

The reason we do this is fairly simple. It is because we don't know it all, and we need to have a really firm understanding about how the certification process is working, because from one profession to the next, it's never the same thing.

Once we've completed the national consultation, we draft action plans with each of those occupations. Through those national action plans, we try to identify for each occupation—because they are not all at the same stage of development—what their top three priorities are in terms of investment by government. We get a really in-depth understanding of where they want us to invest.

Come December 2012 we will have this group of priority occupations that will be streamlined—and I certainly expect the next six are going to meet the standards of the framework. I think I was fairly specific in my remarks, and I cannot insist enough, how important the work is that we are doing right now. I think we have the right approach.

That approach has worked for the first group of eight. It's going to work for the next group of six. We need to renew and extend the mandate, because this issue is not something.... There are so many players. I have named 500 regulatory bodies, and we have credential-assessment agencies. There are a lot of players. There are four different types of departments in each of the provinces. We want everybody to keep pushing in the same direction.

I have to say that this approach of taking priority occupations is working. You see the three of us at the table: Human Resources, Health, and Immigration are all working in the same direction. It's very important that we keep the momentum going, and I really insist on that. So come 2012 I'm really hoping that we're going to be able to extend our mandate beyond that period for another period of five years to identify other occupations that are as important. And I would even go as far as to say that it will be very important that we identify appropriately the occupations that should be part of the next list of priority occupations.

• (1610)

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** In keeping with that and your comment on all three departments working on this file of foreign credentialing and the qualifications associated with it, how are you working together as three different departments to make sure there is not overlap and duplication? What is the division of labour and the integration among the three groups?

Maybe I could ask each of the three departments to comment on that, please.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I'm going to start by saying that, first of all, it's a multi-dimensional issue. I've explained that there are many partners, especially in the provinces. If you think of this issue, there is the immigration dimension; there is the labour dimension; and there are the education and health dimensions. Various departments are organized differently, and what we try to do is to put all of our players on the ice to make sure that we are all pushing in the same direction.

The way we coordinate ourselves is to have very specific and distinguishable mandates. As for HRSDC, as I indicated, we work on fixing systems. I work with regulatory bodies; I don't work directly with the immigrants and don't have projects dealing with sharing of information. That's more the role of CIC, providing the pre-arrival services and working with individuals directly. And my friend at Health Canada—and she can speak to this a little bit more—is working more specifically on attracting professional health workers.

Obviously you've heard Ms. Craig Garrison explaining how she sits on different committees, and I also sit on them. We meet regularly through trilateral meetings to share information and to make sure we're steering the boats in the same direction and not contradicting each other.

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** With regard to CIC's perspective on that question, we're certainly focusing on the overseas portion. We're trying to make sure that before people even come to Canada they have the information about the priority professions in the framework and know what can be done ahead of time, including whether they can start doing some of their educational assessment overseas, and whether they can start doing some of the licensure overseas. Some of

the regulatory bodies do have some programs where there are online practice exams and things like that.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, we also have the Canadian immigrant internship program, which tries to make sure that people do understand what's expected and what is required before they even come to Canada. So while we are doing the back end here in Canada, we're trying to do as much as we can overseas. And through that program, people come for a one-day course. As I said, it's also for spouses and working-age dependants, who can learn more about what's going to happen once they arrive in Canada and what they can do ahead of time. They actually fill out a form called "My Action Plan" and can start working on the process and know whom to contact. Then through that there's also something called focal point partners, wherein they're given contacts for immigrant-serving organizations in the province they think they're going to be moving to, as well as some educational institutions.

So, again, they can start doing some of their credential assessment and preparing their information before they even arrive in Canada.

Finally, to support the framework, we also have the international qualifications network, and that's a website. We found that when we were meeting with the regulators and employers and all of the different groups involved, they said they just didn't have a way to share information in a fast and easy way. So through this, we're creating a website that's about to be launched this fall where they can post information about bridge-to-work programs or some of their best practices. That way others can go there and learn from that rather than having to reinvent the wheel, and they can also tailor that to their own specific needs.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Thank you. The time is up.

You mentioned the work that you focus on overseas, but here in Canada, where do you stop and where does the Foreign Credentials Referral Office start?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** We certainly work with the immigrant specifically. We provide path-finding and referral services through websites, through connecting with employers. We do also work with employers and regulatory bodies, but it is specifically to try to help the person get to the right space even before they arrive.

So there are connections, obviously, to groups in Canada, but it's to try to actually help individuals find the right path.

**The Chair:** We'll move on next to Mr. Davies, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to thank all of you for not only presenting today but also for the work you've done in tackling what we all know is a very complicated and long-standing problem. For those of us who represent ridings with a lot of new Canadians, I can tell you that this work is not only of an academic bent but also work that makes an incredibly profound difference in people's lives. We have tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of people in this country who are unable to practice in their chosen occupations and professions. They're being under-utilized, to the detriment of their own lives and to our economy.

Here's where I want to drill into. I want to try to start understanding how effective we are. From my quick adding up of the numbers, it looks like we've spent about a quarter of a billion dollars since 2003 in various programs. I'd like to get a bit of a snapshot for where we're at.

You identified the 14 occupations in the framework from 2009, and a document that was prepared for us says, "The Framework's principles are to apply to these occupations to ensure a more rapid recognition of credentials." Can you tell us whether you have a handle on how many people actually have had their credentials recognized as a result of that framework in those 14 occupations?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Part of the commitment of the framework is obviously to measure the metrics of what we are trying to achieve. There's an FCRO report that was released on August 18 that contains some of the success stories and the highlights.

In terms of specific numbers tied to an occupation, what we tried to do with the list of 14 priority occupations, which was a fairly complex process, was the following. First, we negotiated with the provinces, and through their sources of data, for example, identified from a simulation model where we were going to have lots of job vacancies and shortages. Then what we tried to do with the select group of 14 occupations was to make sure that we covered as broad a base as possible, as representative a base as possible, of the occupations principally associated with those who are coming here as skilled workers.

If you ask me for a specific number, I don't have it. But the idea is really to cover as broad a base as possible, representing those who are coming to this country, so that we're able to help them. If an occupation is mainly dominated by the Canadians who are here, and there are not a lot of immigrants coming from any source country, it's not on our list, for obvious reasons.

• (1620)

**Mr. Don Davies:** The federal training program for newcomers is overseen by FCRO. It allows newcomers to Canada to try to take advantage of a Canadian work experience in the public service. It's said that about 11 federal departments are involved and that 20 departments, agencies, and crown corporations have expressed interest in the recruitment process in September 2011. Do we have any numbers there? How many people have received jobs through that program?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** We have informal numbers, because it is a new pilot that we're trying. This is now the second year, so we've only had one year with it. But last year, there were 50 people and, I believe, 20 actually were accepted in the public service once they became Canadians and applied externally to the public service. So in a year and a half, we've heard there are 12 who have been accepted into the public service, once they became Canadians and applied to external competitions.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Thank you.

Challenge exams are one way I've heard that people can qualify for occupations. If you're a dentist who trained in the United States and practised there for 10 years and you want to come to Canada, one thing is to be able to write a challenge exam. They don't need more education; they don't need to go to school.

Of the 14 occupations in the framework—engineers, dentists, nurses, physicians—how many of those, if any, have challenge exams so that someone can come here, write an exam, pass it, and then be prepared to work?

**Mr. Jonathan Wells (Director, Operations, Labour Market Integration, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development):** If you mean, by challenge exam, a national entry-to-practice licensing exam, you'd be looking at in the neighbourhood of 13 out of 14.

What we're trying to do in many cases, to use your example of dentists, is to bypass an exam. Dentists in the United States, for example, have a mutual recognition agreement. So in many cases, a dentist trained from an accredited program in the United States would bypass the exam process. And those are the types of paths we're looking at developing. The national licensing—

**Mr. Don Davies:** Can I interrupt you for a second and ask about that, because it was very interesting to me?

Who reached that agreement regarding dentists? How did it happen that a dentist in the States could bypass that agreement and practise here? Who were the parties to that agreement?

**Mr. Jonathan Wells:** They would be the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation and their American counterpart. That's a profession-to-profession mutual recognition or reciprocity agreement. There's a variety of those in the professions, providing one vehicle by which people can gain access. It's an express route of sorts. That's certainly an option that's being explored actively under the framework implementation.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I'm interested in finding out how successful the internationally educated health professionals initiative, launched in 2005 with \$75 million, has been. I'm sorry to be blunt in my questions, but I'm trying to understand how many health professionals you estimate are working today in Canada after having their credentials recognized through that program?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** Thank you for your question.

We don't have a precise number. I wish I did have a precise number to give you. We have proxy information about the increases in the numbers of internationally trained nurses, for example, who are currently employed in Canada as well as international medical graduates. There's been an increase in both of those professions as a percentage of the overall workforce in both of those occupations. Unfortunately, I don't have an exact number that I could point to for each occupation.

**Mr. Don Davies:** I'm wondering if there is any way we could maybe improve our ability to track that. It seems that we're spending a lot of money and engaging in a lot of work. I recognize there's some lack of precision to be sure, but is there some way we could start to find out how effective these programs are?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Thank you for your question.

I couldn't agree with you more that reporting and tracking of performance is really important. That's why it's a fundamental pillar of the framework. We also have to acknowledge that we've only produced our first report on the framework this year. As you well know, whatever sources of data we can access, there's always a certain time lag in being able to observe changes in volume and composition.

I did some national consultations with the engineer's group, and it's been really fascinating to have worked with Engineers Canada since 2003. One of the things they said to us was that, "You think you care about this issue, but we care more than you do. Do you want to know why?" It was because there are some provinces who certify more people coming from abroad than they have coming out of school in the province. This is how important it is to them. So it's not just important for us, but also for the regulators. It's a very important issue for them.

One thing I did note is that the longer you work with an occupation, the more likely the mindset of that regulator will change. Here, I will say that we were speaking a couple of minutes ago about the dental profession. I have to say that I am absolutely thrilled and excited about our achievement with dentists. I can give you the number of how many were assessed appropriately before, when we didn't have a process. It was a very quick process; you would say to them that they could go back to school for two years—and that was it. But now, we're going to have an actual process that looks at their credentials, and that's a direct result of the framework. That we can measure.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

I think this would be an appropriate place to suspend for five minutes before we carry on with our next round. So that's what we'll do. Thank you.

• (1625)

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

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Having had the break, we'll continue with questioning, starting with Mr. Shory.

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thanks to the witnesses for coming and giving us wonderful presentations, I would say, in really simple language.

Mr. Chair, I will tell you this. I have lived through the foreign credential recognition problems. When I came to Canada from India in 1989, I had been a lawyer for nine years and it took me six to seven years to get back into my profession.

Things have changed. I have to say that the leadership role taken by our Conservative government has changed the dynamics of the whole game. The CIC took this pre-arrival orientation, for example, and through HRSDC a couple of years ago, we took this leadership with a pan-Canadian framework process. All of this has helped. In my own profession today, things have drastically changed, I would say. It doesn't take that long now.

And of course I agree with you that this is a complex matter, with all kinds of regulatory bodies and departments having to work with each other. It is not a simple and straightforward process.

But one thing struck me, Mr. LaRue, in your presentation on page 5, where you said that "Common key messages delivered at these meetings identified...increased availability of supervised work placements...." That line I like.

I'm from Calgary, Alberta. I have heard some people say that the safest place to have a heart attack in Alberta might be the back seat of a taxi. The chances are that it is a doctor who is driving that car—which to an extent is true. But it is very serious, though. Keeping that in mind, and at the same time that the demand for that particular profession is high, I will pose my questions, and anyone can elaborate on them.

My number one question would be, what is Health Canada doing to help foreign-trained doctors get licensed and integrate into our health workforce? I have heard from quite a few doctors that there is a process of foreign qualification assessment. They are told to pass some exams. They do pass their exams. They invest their money. Ultimately, some of them are not successful in getting residency. So there is a practical pathway, and I believe, working with provinces and territories, that is also their goal. I can also see the will of provinces and the territories when they work on the framework that, ultimately, we'll be able to resolve that issue also.

So is the federal government doing anything to address that residency challenge?

• (1640)

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I'm going to let my colleague from Health Canada answer the question, but I'd like to thank you for it. I certainly observe that you're one of the living reasons we're doing all the work that we're doing, and we're very proud to be here today.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** Thank you very much for your question.

First, I'd like to say that Health Canada recognizes that the provincial and territorial governments have jurisdiction over health human resource planning. That includes the recruitment and retention of health professionals, as well as the number of residency seats that are available on an annual basis.

At the same time, I can tell you that some improvements are being made. For example, we now have online self-assessment tools to assess someone's readiness to write qualifying exams. We have exams being written more frequently and online in other countries. This is a step forward as well.

We have multimedia faculty development programs for teachers of international medical graduates. This is being implemented to more fully integrate internationally educated medical professionals into the health workforce. We also have a website that is a central source of information.

The more complex issues are also being tackled. One of them is related to the assessment of IMGs when they come to Canada and seek a residency placement. We have consistent standards developed around entry to residency through the Medical Council of Canada and with a number of other stakeholders, including regulatory authorities and provincial and territorial governments, as well as a whole host of stakeholders.

That work has been done. It's been completed. It is in the implementation stages. This should help accelerate...or certainly it will help people's expectations around what is required of them for entry into residency. It speaks to some of the issues related to the FQR framework around fairness, transparency, and timeliness.

The basis of this work that we're doing now will support work that is starting to happen around entry to practice and developing the same types of consistent standards around assessment for entry to practice. So when someone comes to Canada and has been a practising physician in another country, these processes will help accelerate their assessment; and then if the assessment is not what they had hoped, there'll also be an opportunity to help direct a person into a possible alternative career.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I might also add that through the economic action plan, the government has provided us with significant means of addressing some of those issues.

As you know, over the course of two years we invested \$50 million to address a list of priority occupations. The federal government has included physicians as part of the next set of priority occupations. That's certainly a very concrete step.

The \$50 million also served to fund a project with the Medical Council of Canada—certainly with HRSDC, and in collaboration with Health Canada—to develop a national process to provide support for international and Canadian medical graduates as they apply for medical registration.

What this project will literally do is to streamline the process for obtaining a medical licence. When we talk about concrete examples of what the framework does in terms of dealing with the occupations, these projects are fundamental. We have, as you know, 14 priority occupations, and we've had projects with all the occupations to date. We're continuing, through the process of national consultation, to establish and identify the priorities for those occupations and then to determine how we can help them improve their process.

Obviously not all of the occupations start from the same starting points, so we adapt our projects to their needs.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up—in fact more than up.

We'll move to Mr. Cuzner for seven minutes.

• (1645)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thanks very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Madam Craig Garrison, I'll ask a question that's probably posed around a table at Tim Hortons on a fairly regularly basis. In a country as affluent as Canada, why is it we're not able to fill the demand for medical professionals, for doctors and what have you? Why are we

not able to provide enough Canadian doctors for current and future needs? Could you give me an overview of the number of seats in medical schools across the country? Are they growing? Have they grown?

I know for a fact that young people from my riding who are skilled students, great students, have continually applied to medical schools and there's just no room for them. Two of them, a brother and sister from my riding, friends of my oldest guy, are in medical school in the Caribbean now. It's not a bad gig, I guess, but they hope to come back here and practice.

Why are they not being allowed the opportunity here? Or are we providing enough opportunity, I guess, for those who want to study medicine in this country?

Perhaps I could have your comments on that before we get into the credentials.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** Thank you for your question.

Medical school enrollment has increased substantially in the last few years. In fact, first-year undergraduate medical school enrollment has increased by 60% over the last decade.

The provinces and the territories, which have responsibility for health human resources and deciding how many seats will be made available, have increased the seats by over 1,000 in the decade between 2000 and 2010. First-year residency positions have increased by 84%.

I think part of what you may be describing is the very competitive nature of people who wish to go to medical school. It's commendable that young people want to go into medicine, but there are a finite number of resources the provinces and territories can dedicate to their health system functioning. I think their cooperation with their medical faculties results in a set number of residencies becoming available.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** With the increase of 1,000 seats, have we seen the number of foreign medical professionals go down over that period of time, or does it continue grow?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** No, the numbers of IMGs applying to post-graduate residency training are up significantly, and more Canadians are going abroad to study. We estimate that there are 3,500 Canadians studying medicine abroad, with approximately 700 graduates each year, and many of them seek to come back to Canada.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** I think anybody around the table who's travelled to African nations, or wherever, and has come back and has a Nigerian doctor, that's all well and fine, but we know that the country is less.... I'm just thinking that with our country's wealth and our understanding, you can see that we should continue to invest and grow those opportunities for Canadian students, as well.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** I think I'll come back to my original point about provincial and territorial governments wishing to control that aspect of their health systems. It's a very important and very large part of their system. Health human resources comprises a big part of the system. They make their own policies. They make their own plans, and we—

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** What about these 3,500 Canadian students who study abroad? What's the difference between their coming back to qualify and a foreign-trained national from another country coming in to qualify? Is there any grace given to the Canadian student?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** In terms of students who are applying to go into residency training, there is no real difference between Canadians who grew up in Canada and went abroad to do their undergraduate training and people who have come to Canada and wish to go into a residency position. All of the applicants must be permanent residents of Canada to apply.

So it depends. In fact, that is not the case: they are the same in terms of their positioning in the residency competition. A large number of Canadians are studying abroad.

• (1650)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** So these two young people, whom I used as a concrete example, will have to wait in the queue just as somebody else who wants to immigrate to Canada to get their credentials?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** They're not immigrating to do that. They have to be here to apply.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Oh, yes. Okay. I'm sorry.

Thank you very much for that.

There are two other questions I want to ask.

One is on the benchmarks identified in the framework in 2009. Obviously, progress is being made, and you're very excited about the eight occupations and other six occupations in the priority areas. I apologize for not knowing this, but were there benchmarks set out in the original framework for the number of professions? Were there benchmarks set that you wanted to accomplish  $x$  number of professions by such and such a date?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** That's exactly right.

The group of 14, as I indicated, was divided into two groups. The timelines were fairly tight for the first group. When the framework was launched—if I recall, it was in November 2009—we essentially had until December 2010 to streamline the first group of occupations. Now, we were pretty lucky, in the sense that we had been working for quite a while with many of those occupations, which allowed us to proceed and achieve the objectives we wanted.

The second group is scheduled for December 2012. We had two years for the group of six, which obviously reflects the more complex nature of some of the occupations, namely teachers and, certainly, dentists and physicians.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Teachers?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Teachers are part of the second group.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** The reciprocity agreement you commented on makes tremendous sense.

Is the federal government involved in initiating such reciprocity agreements, or do they take place within professional organizations and we don't try to nurture those relationships?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** You have to understand that the federal government is a facilitator. We're not necessarily accountable for this specifically. Provinces are responsible enough, and they delegate these responsibilities to the regulatory occupations. We work with the regulatory bodies and, as I said at the beginning of my presentation, every occupation is unique and at a certain place in its development.

These issues are fairly recent. Barely a decade ago, we wouldn't have talked as intensively as we're talking about these issues now. We're facing this problem of the aging of society and shortages and problems with productivity.

When we work through the projects, the first step is a diagnostic one with the occupations. Through the diagnostic, we identify all sorts of needs that they have.

For part of those needs and as part of those plans, we have a project coming for approval, which I can't talk about it because it's not public yet. But we have certainly encouraged the occupations to examine the potential for a mutual recognition agreements with various countries. Many occupations already have those in place with various countries. We try to encourage them to explore what partnership they could have with other countries that they think are fairly similar. That could fast-track the process of integration, because if there is a way to do it, that's certainly one.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'll ask for a very short remark. We're well over his time.

**Mr. Jonathan Wells:** We've also recently announced a conference that will pull together all of the professions from the framework. It will look at the issue of mutual recognition agreements and reciprocity; under what circumstances they work; which countries should be targeted; what are the costs related to the upkeep of these; and whether they are viable vehicles, because they certainly are the express route.

So we do take that as one of our very serious strategies in terms of implementation. We have funded a number of professions to investigate and negotiate and sign these types of agreements.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now move to Mr. Butt.

[Translation]

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

Can you give me some more details on the Budget 2011 commitment that we've made around the pilot project. What exactly does that entail, what kind of budget numbers are we talking about, and how many individuals do we think that initiative will serve?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** You're going to have to allow me to step back a little bit to explain the context for the initiative.

We have heard musings over the last few months that many immigrants were faced with significant credential costs when passing their exams. That's particularly true in the medical professions. Here, I'm not talking about physicians but about the medical professions in general. We've been asked to examine whether or not this was a real barrier. We know that language is a barrier. We know that credentialing is a barrier. We know that lack of experience is a barrier. But the question we were asked was, are financial barriers real barriers for individuals coming from outside?

What we had essentially heard is that when immigrants come here from outside the country, they don't have a credit history and literally cannot access our credit system as a result. It's the same for Canadians who have studied abroad. They are coming back and have this big gap, and the chartered banks in Canada are reluctant to lend money to people who don't have a credit history. So we've observed that.

We've looked at the literature out there on whether or not this is a real problem, because we want to do it based on evidence. There is not a lot of information, aside from survey data, telling us that 50%, say, face financial concerns and 30% cannot get credit when they try to get it. That information was pretty thin.

So instead of establishing, what I would call, costly new programs that sometimes don't work, the department over the years has learned to proceed carefully, step by step. What we have is an initiative whereby we're going to spend approximately \$6 million per year over the next three years, working in partnership with the communities and the agents on various projects. We're going to have up to 10 project sites and are going to try to encourage the communities to assemble the key partnerships that are needed to provide access to credit.

We did a survey, or a scan, if you will, of what's going on in the country, and there are a few initiatives currently on the ground. They're great initiatives and we're going to try to solicit proposals on what we can do to support them. Essentially we're going to do an institutional test of sorts to find out the best model, the lessons learned, and figure out if there is a problem and what can be fixed, and how best we can provide support and whether there is a role for government in the long-term in doing this work.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** My next question is probably for Ms. Pateman.

One of the stories we hear from time to time from the recent immigrant is, "Well, if I'd only known it was going to be this tough to get my credentials recognized, and if I'd only known it was going to be...."

So can you tell me again a little more about what kind of assistance and pre-screening we're doing in the country of origin when people are considering coming to Canada, in warning them and not selling them a story that they're going to arrive here, get off the plane, and be doing an operation at 3 o'clock in the afternoon that day; that we're warning them that there are going to be credentialing issues and that it is going to take time and that certain professions are going to recognize their credentials more quickly than others? Can

you give me a little bit more detail on what we're doing for these people before they get on Canadian soil?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** Absolutely. Thank you.

Yes, as I said, the Canadian immigration integration project has now been launched in four countries. It actually also covers 25 other countries through satellite and itinerant services, so that's quite a bit. Through that it covers about 75% of the federal skilled worker program and about 44% of provincial nominees. So that's quite a chunk of skilled immigrants and their families who are getting this information.

As I said, they go to an orientation session about what it's like to live and work in Canada. But we also provide more details. We bring in partners like Royal Bank and CIBC, who talk about what it means to work in the financial industry in Canada. And people, as I said, will get one-on-one counselling services and will find out that it's not easy, that they do have to go through a lot of steps, that they have to be proactive and that they do have to network. They're taught about resumés and doing interviews, and about how bridge-to-work programs could help. And then, as I mentioned, they are linked in Canada to a service where they can find out more information about some of those programs, such as bridging-to-work and getting the Canadian experience as soon as they land.

There was an evaluation done of the project when I was at HRSDC and we found that it was quite successful—which is why we made it a program. We found that people who find work within the first year have much better long-term economic outcomes. We found that 93% found work within the first year, which is very high, and a great portion of those also found work within their field—again, because they were prepared.

The immigrants themselves, when they were interviewed, said that it was an absolutely essential service. They said they felt very well prepared, that they knew the steps, they knew it was going to be tough, and actually knew what was coming. So their expectations were tempered, which was great. We also found through surveys that Canada's reputation as a place to actually come to was much improved through this program.

● (1700)

**Mr. Brad Butt:** The last area I'll ask about is that while they may have professional competencies, their ability to communicate effectively in either English or French is seen to be a major stumbling block to their being able even to take additional training in Canada to get to a level that would allow them to practice in their profession, and is not strong enough for them to actually work in those professions, in which communication is crucial. If you're working in a medical profession and can't communicate effectively with the people you're working with, it's clearly going to be a problem.

Are we doing some vetting or providing some help around language training so that we're making sure they have don't just have professional competency but are also able to properly and effectively communicate in English or French, depending on where they are, what their profession is, and where they plan to work?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh (Director, Foreign Qualification Recognition, Foreign Credentials Referral Office, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada):** We're trying to address that issue from both ends, in the selection criteria that we set for immigrants and in providing language training supports for immigrants once they're here.

One of the changes CIC has recently introduced is that we're now requiring immigration applicants to have their language assessed before they arrive in Canada. We're taking the results of that language training into account in the points grid that determines their overall eligibility to immigrate to Canada. That's one of the changes we've introduced.

We still provide a substantial amount of post-arrival language training to immigrants. This can often be supplemented by the specific training they get within the profession for communicating and working in their profession.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have one question to ask, and I will be sharing my time with my colleague.

I am from Quebec, from the Saguenay— Lac-Saint-Jean region. When I was elected on May 2<sup>nd</sup> I was approached by businessmen in my riding who said they would like to see a certain flexibility with regard to immigration to our region.

The reason for that is that we have a high unemployment rate. Moreover, we have a lot of dropouts and young people who haven't finished high school. People are retiring and the population is aging.

We heard a lot about physicians, dentists and nurses, but let's talk about trades first. There are plumbers, welders, steel erectors and boiler operators.

Is something being done on your side to speed this up? Because there is going to be a shortage in our area, and these are good trades.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Absolutely.

I don't often have the opportunity to answer questions in French. And so I may have to use certain acronyms in English. I am asking you to be patient with me.

The pan-Canadian framework has a very specific section. If you look at the framework you will see a list of priority occupations. We were asked to work with directors who work with people in these trades groups. In English, this is the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, the CCDA, who work with tradespeople. Essentially, we are going to try to identify occupations which... Naturally if we can extend the mandate beyond 2012—I dare hope that we will do so—we will be discussing including these trades groups. We must absolutely dedicate our efforts to that. Because we can see very clearly, on the list of professions, that there will be labour shortages, we see that the trades are one sector where we are going to have to focus our efforts. The framework recognizes this

explicitly and we have several projects at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada wherein people work directly with some of these trades groups.

These may not be exactly trades groups as you define them, but we have a sector council in the area of tourism, for instance. Naturally, I am talking about people who are chefs, cooks, servers. These are professions that may not be regulated necessarily in a very specific way but they are clearly trades where there will be needs in the future.

We shared your concerns, quite specifically.

• (1705)

**Mr. Claude Patry:** If I understood your reply correctly, for the moment, nothing is being done for the trades.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** No. We have a series of projects wherein we are working with trades such as the trades in the tourism sector, as I just explained. There are others. I know that the sector councils have done some work involving the construction trades. In the telecommunications sector also, welders and various other trades are needed.

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Thank you for being here with us, and congratulations on these essential services that you offer.

The purpose of my question is not to find the gaps in the services that you offer, but to perhaps find ways to improve those services.

My question is addressed to Ms. Pateman. The Canadian Immigration Integration Program delivers services in various places and also offers satellite services in some others. Would it be a good idea to have services in other countries, or in other regions that do not currently benefit from CIIP services?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** We have already expanded the program from the initial pilot, and when we do the evaluation of the program in 2012 we want to see whether there could be further expansions. As I mentioned, right now we're hitting about 75% of all federal skilled workers. That is quite a high percentage.

But we certainly want to see whether there are other specific groups we could expand it to, and whether there are other countries as well. But we are looking forward to having a formal evaluation of the program done to see what the results are before making any further decisions.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Thank you.

You say that you can offer services to 75% of applicants, skilled workers, at the federal level. What is happening with regard to the remaining 25%? Can you not at this time provide services to all those who request them?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** Currently we don't do that. However, they can still access our website and other services. Some people travel to access them.



Right now, we have expanded as much as we can with the resources we have, but we're certainly looking at other ways by which we could provide services electronically to that other 25%. They can go online and fill out the workbook and call people to ask for additional help and additional services, but for the other 25% it has to be done on a virtual scale right now.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** If I may, I would like to add some information. We offer the Working in Canada website. Recently, I took part in an expedition to China where we observed consultation sessions with candidates. This is a tool that is used a great deal and was developed by the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. On this site we provide information among other things on the various local labour markets, job opportunities, salaries, and the vacancy rates for the various occupations. You can even find information on the regulations that govern certain occupations, regulations brought in by the governments in the various places where the candidates want to go. In this way, we give them as many tools as possible when they come here.

Just to give you an idea of our success rate in reaching our targets, I would say that last year, there were 3 million visits to the Working in Canada website. The site not only offers information people can read, it is also an interactive site where people can ask for information. The site can produce over 40,000 distinct, individual reports. Out of the 3 million hits, there were 2 million requests for reports, and these were delivered. For the past three years, the number of visits to the site has been increasing exponentially. This is another way for us to reach immigrants overseas and provide them with information even before they arrive here.

• (1710)

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:** Once again, I want to acknowledge that these programs are very rich and they provide people with assistance that is certainly precious. That is why I wonder if you have come up with ways of doing things that might increase even more the percentage of people who could benefit from these Internet services or are aware of them. These are good services. How can we offer them to a greater number of people? Do you have any ideas to broaden their reach?

[English]

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** It is a good question. As I said, as part of the evaluation we'll be looking at source countries and where most of the applicants are coming from. As we've said, we certainly have some different initiatives under way, such as via Google and ads and things such as those, whereby we can promote our website and our services. We are also working with our missions overseas so that, when people come in to apply or mail in their application, our program is promoted as well. So they can access it electronically.

We are trying to see what the best countries are in terms of the most applicants, including the 75% of the foreign skilled worker applicants and their spouses and working-age adults. So we are getting quite a few people that way, as well as the provincial nominees and their spouses and working-age adults.

So it is that amount of the principal applicants, as well as family members. So we are covering quite a bit, but we are looking at other

electronic means to expand the program and, possibly, to other countries. But we will wait for the evaluation for that.

**The Chair:** Your time is up.

We'll move now to Mr. McColeman. You may or may not be sharing your time. We'll see.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** I'm interested in one of the comments that was made in regard to targeting countries. I think it was Mr. Wells who made the comment that you're targeting countries as well. Can you explain a little bit more about that, how you're targeting them and how you're determining that?

**Mr. Jonathan Wells:** It's not necessarily that we're targeting countries writ large. I think the idea is that certain professions will target countries, and I give the example of certified general accountants. Our project with the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada is investigating those countries that have education and licensing systems that are substantially equivalent to Canada's and that might be candidates for having a mutual recognition or reciprocity agreement.

It's really profession by profession; it's not Canada vis-à-vis another country writ large. The individual profession will take a look at its licensing and the standards for licensure and examine whether there's an equivalency with the standards of licensure in another jurisdiction. If those conditions are right, it could permit a full mutual recognition agreement whereby individuals can become licensed just by passing particular customized tax codes, or something like that, in the Canadian context, or where they can achieve advanced standing within the Canadian licensing and assessment process by virtue of the education or licensure they have in that country. So it's very much profession by profession, and we've investigated that issue with each of the priority occupations and are pursuing it with some of them.

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** If I can add to this, it's always about the state of readiness for that occupation and the direction it wishes to go.

This is a really important point, that what we have is a facilitative role. We do not impose. We where we come in is that we diagnose, we examine, we discuss, and we try to ascertain what is the best direction for an occupation, in collaboration with them. If the occupation says that according to its diagnostic, it needs to know a little bit more about this and that, that's how we facilitate the examination through the funding we have available.

In listening to your question, you seemed to be asking whether we were targeting one country versus another. No, we're not. In fact it's the regulator who tell us where it thinks we should go according to priorities. And this is also done in collaboration with the provincial governments.

• (1715)

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** If you interpreted my question that way, I just think it's common sense to target countries and to target where the commonality is, which will make it easier for people to come to this country and work in their chosen profession.

I'm wondering is Ms. Pateman might comment on this as well, in terms of CIC's work. Are you undertaking any special initiatives or outreach efforts to particular countries around the world? You've mentioned that you're doing this up-front work. Are there particular countries that take priority because they are more aligned with us, perhaps in being English-speaking, et cetera?

I'll give you a specific example. I was in Ireland this summer, where there are a lot of highly talented engineers. Due to their economic situation and the situation that country is going through, their questions were specific: How do I make an application to Canada?

This almost moves into a recruitment mode in some ways. Is that happening at Immigration?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** The process at Immigration is that we don't target specific countries; we allow any immigrant who wants to come to Canada to come here. So the source countries for immigration tend to vary over the years. Right now, we see most of the applicants for immigration coming from countries like China, India, the Philippines, et cetera.

So when it comes to our work with the professions, as Jean-François said, we are trying to encourage the professions. If we know that many nurses, let's say, are coming to Canada from the Philippines, it may make sense for the regulatory bodies in Canada to study the Philippine nursing system in more detail so they can better understand how the training there relates to Canadian standards, possibly resulting in something like a mutual recognition agreement or some other form of partial agreement, so that the applicant doesn't have to go through each of the steps individually.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Let me give you another example, or come at it from a different angle. I lost my family doctor because he was recruited in Canada to go to another country. He was recruited here by them. They made an attractive offer to him to emigrate to another country, which he did.

What I'm suggesting here, and I'd like anyone on the panel to tackle this, is that if Canada needs certain professionals, be they bricklayers, talented masons, engineers, or whomever, would it not make sense for us to be proactive? I see this nice partnership working together to try to identify this, but unless you're upfront and you're out there actually targeting more aggressively.... Is that not part of the strategy you should be working towards?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I would agree with you that being competitive is extremely important. There are different ways of being competitive. One way is what you described and, certainly, I think many occupations are probably working with that kind of mindset.

For our part, a lot of the work we do at HRSDC is done on the basis of our being a fundamental pillar making sure that we have a country that is attractive for immigrants. How do we do that? We do two things. First, we're trying to streamline the foreign credential recognition process. And, second, once the immigrants are in the country, we want to make sure they can seize the opportunities wherever they are. That's the richness of our country.

Whether they come in through Ontario, Quebec, B.C., we say to them that they have full labour mobility if their skills are recognized

in any given province. When you have a frame like this around the country, you're building a stronger, more vibrant economic union. What you offer to them are the opportunities they're seeking.

Obviously, this is not exactly a strategy of targeting countries, the way you're describing it, but what we try to do is to put the winning conditions there for these people to thrive in this country.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Can I just ask one last question, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Very briefly.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Does what I'm talking about make sense?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Yes, it does.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Does it make sense to the people from Immigration?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** Well, there is indirect targeting, in the sense that Immigration Canada does have something called ministerial instructions. The minister has the purview to designate certain occupations as being in demand. We determine which occupations are in demand through consultations to see where there are labour market shortages. So at any given time there's a list of occupations where we give preference to immigrants coming to those intended occupations.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move now to Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you.

I have a bunch of questions on the numbers.

On page 7 of the CIC brief, where you are talking about the CIIP program, you indicated that 62% of the 1,051 graduates found employment in their first six months after arrival. Do you have any idea who found employment in their recognized field out of that 62%?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** I do have that.

Sorry, it's just going to take me two seconds to find it.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** While you're looking for that number, I'll pose a question for Mrs. Craig Garrison.

Of the residencies available in Canada for physicians, how many of them are available for foreign-trained physicians?

While you're getting that number, I'll go back to Ms. Pateman.

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** Thank you.

It's actually 60%. So it's quite high.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** So 60% of the 62% found work in their own fields?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** That's right.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** So what would that be? According to my quick math, would it roughly be 240 people out of the 1,051?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** Sorry, if I could just throw in another number, more than one-fifth, or 22%, were working in the same field or higher than in their home country. And 44% found employment within six months, and 62% within six months.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Are those figures available on your website, or is there a report that we could look at?

**Mrs. Natasha Pateman:** The evaluation is public and we can certainly provide it to the committee.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** That would be very useful because it looks like this program is having some success.

Ms. Craig Garrison, did you find that number?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** Yes. There are approximately 2,700, or in that range, of ministry-funded residencies across the country. Of those—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Hang on. There are 2,700 funded residencies in total?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** That's correct—approximately.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Okay, approximately.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** Of those, 426 are designated for INGs.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Out of that 426, as I understood you to say earlier, those would include Canadians who went abroad to get their training or foreign-trained doctors who are immigrating here. So there are 426 available to that whole pool.

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** That's correct.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Do you have any sense of how many foreign-trained physicians are actually interested in that pool?

**Mrs. Margo Craig Garrison:** It's approximately 1,900.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** There are 1,900. Okay.

I have another question on the numbers.

Out of the number of people who get their credentials recognized in Canada, do you have any sense of how many find work in their field?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** Unfortunately, that varies very much by profession, as you can imagine. Some of the professions, frankly, aren't doing as well in that regard. I think medical laboratory technologists have a very low success rate when it comes to internationally trained applicants passing the exam and becoming licensed. It's in the range of about 10%.

This really speaks to the types of improvements we're trying to make with the FQR framework in working with those regulators to find out what the gaps are and where are people falling down along the pathway to licensure, so that we can introduce some improvements that would help increase that—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Is there an easy way to get at those numbers, or do you have to go to each—

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** The numbers are kept by each provincial regulatory body and not all of them keep the stats. But one of the things Jean-François mentioned earlier is that we are trying to work with provinces through the framework to look at some ways of doing this very broad reporting. How can we answer some of these

fundamental questions, such as, are we making improvements with the framework? We're certainly seeing a lot of—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** That's a pretty important question. It sounds like people are putting a lot of effort into that and doing a tremendous amount of work, but if the results aren't being shown on the ground, that's an important point.

I have another numbers question.

I wanted to go back to the "Recognizing Success" report from November 2009. On page six of that report, which I don't expect you to have, one of the witnesses indicated—and I know I've heard this from people in my riding who have come to Canada and have some sort of professional accreditation from their country of origin—that only 10% of applicants had received their credentials before they came to the country.

Do you have any sense of how many people are now getting their credentials recognized before they actually come into the country? I know you have your two-day orientation session, which gives people all kinds of information, but World Education Services appears to be saying that some people are getting their credentials recognized even before they come into the country.

Do you have a sense if there's been any improvement on this 10% number?

• (1725)

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** The number that's referred to there are for those people who have had their academic credentials assessed. WES is an organization that assesses just the educational credentials of applicants; it doesn't speak to their ability to be licensed. That is a very important first step in the process to become licensed. One of the first things regulatory bodies want to know is how does someone's international training compare to that in Canada?

To get their credentials assessed before they arrive in Canada is very important, and something that we're trying to encourage our immigrants to do, because that gives them a much better sense or a reality check, which I think another member was speaking about earlier.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** How are the credentials recognized before people get into Canada?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** Applicants can certainly begin to have their academic credentials assessed either through an organization like WES, which provides generic assessment, or sometimes by the profession that actually does licensing for that profession. It's something that we're working to achieve with the regulatory bodies.

How many of these licensing steps can actually begin in this pre-arrival state? That's of particular interest to our department.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** This is probably more of a comment, but there are educators involved in setting standards. There are regulators, and then there are professional organizations. In your experience, are all three of those groups included in planning and the processes around foreign credential recognition?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** Certainly.

Through the national consultation, we've conducted priority occupations. We have made sure to cover all of those bases. As I said, we want all of the players on the ice, and we make sure that we've covered our bases.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

Do you have a couple of short questions?

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Yes, I do, Chair. I could share a question with Mr. Daniel, here.

If I owned an engineering firm—and here I want to get to what Mr. McColeman said—and I want to recruit engineers from Ireland, I can do that through immigration. Can I not go and do my recruiting and work with those people? I can understand that the Government of Canada has to be impartial. You allow immigrants to come in with different credentials, but as an employer, if I need engineers and I want them from a certain country or countries, can I do that through immigration?

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** One of the ways that immigrants can come to Canada is through something like an arranged employment offer or through the provincial nominee program. We haven't talked about that much, but the provincial nominee program is a way that provinces can tell us that they are looking for very specific numbers of people to work for employers. They have that ability to bring people in to work for specific employers to meet their needs.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Right. I am from British Columbia, and I know they have been very active in doing that in British Columbia. So that's where I'm coming from.

So that's your answer.

**The Chair:** In Saskatchewan, they're very active at that as well.

Mr. Daniel, would you like to finish with a couple of short questions?

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Okay. I'll ask just one question.

We have a lot of temporary workers coming here. Is the same assessment of their abilities done before they come?

**Mr. Jean-François LaRue:** I'm sorry, I am really not an expert on the temporary foreign worker program, so I would be speaking out of my depth here. We can get back to you with an answer in writing to that specific question.

I think Mr. Walsh could answer part of the question.

**Mr. Brendan Walsh:** For temporary foreign workers, an arrangement is made with employers. So it all depends on the type of workers that employers are bringing in. Many of the temporary foreign workers in Canada now are working in less-skilled occupations, where it is less critical to have a real assessment of their competencies.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Our time is up.

I know it's a very interesting area, but we're going to adjourn. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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