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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Monday, June 17, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Nick Whalen**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Monday, June 17, 2019

•(1545)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.)):**

Welcome, everyone.

I call to order the 167th meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. This is very likely our last meeting before Parliament rises, which is expected to happen this week.

I'd like to welcome a couple of new members to our committee today, temporary members Don Rusnak and Linda Lapointe.

Don, I'd like to thank you for your four years in Parliament. I understand you're not seeking re-election, but thank you for your service.

We'll begin with an opening statement by the departmental officials here to brief us today on the rural and northern immigration pilot, followed by normal rounds of questioning.

I understand there may be interruptions over the course of the next half-hour. We might be seeking unanimous consent to continue to pose questions to the witnesses until the time to vote, so that all parties will have an opportunity to participate in the debate.

Without further ado, I'd like to welcome Natasha Kim, Lara Dyer and Corinne Prince.

Ms. Kim, please proceed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Natasha Kim (Acting Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members. I'm pleased to be here with my colleagues to provide information on the rural and northern immigration pilot.

[English]

We have a presentation that will brief the committee on the approach and design of the new pilot. I believe it has been circulated in both languages. As honourable members may also be aware, the minister announced this past Friday the 11 communities that have been selected to participate in the pilot. This followed an open call-out to communities that ran from January to March earlier this year. We also provided copies of the press release for that announcement, so that committee members could have that for reference as well.

First, I'd like to start with the overall context for the pilot. As the committee is aware, rural and northern Canada offers important opportunities and benefits for Canada's economy. However, economic and demographic shifts in Canada are felt more acutely in rural areas, which can hinder their ability to seize economic opportunities. While part of the issue is certainly domestic out-migration of youth and other populations to urban centres, another part is that rural and remote areas have traditionally not benefited from immigration to the same extent as larger cities.

Immigration helps Canada's labour force continue to grow each year, and will account for up to 80% of labour force growth nationally by the end of the decade. Programs such as the provincial nominee program have been successful in spreading the economic benefits of immigration across the country. The ratio of immigrants landing outside our three largest provinces grew fourfold from 1997, with the first provincial nominee program, to 2017, thanks in part to significant growth in this program. However, a large majority of immigrants still do not settle in rural and remote areas. In 2017, almost four out of five new immigrants settled in Canada's 10 largest cities.

The rural and northern immigration pilot is really designed to address these trends that we see. It's clear that rural and northern Canada has much to offer newcomers, including career opportunities, a positive quality of life and a welcoming community. It's equally clear that there are opportunities for rural and northern communities to benefit from immigration, to grow their local labour force, to sustain and enhance community services by growing the tax base, and to seize economic opportunities for growth.

While many of our immigration pathways, including express entry and the provincial nominee program, can already be used by all immigrants, employers and communities of all sizes to attract and retain immigrants, the pilot will be using a new community-driven approach to empower communities to identify the newcomers most likely to economically prosper and develop roots in their community, and then to stay there in the long run with their families.

We'll explain a bit later in the presentation what this community-driven approach looks like.

[Translation]

Community-based supports will be developed with community partners to promote employment opportunities and to encourage the integration and retention of newcomers and their families. This approach was chosen to encourage immigration to smaller centres and to give communities the necessary tools to play an active role in immigration. It requires testing with new partnerships.

[English]

On slide 4, I'll explain a bit more about what we mean by new partnerships. As noted earlier, to select communities we posted a call-out for communities to express their interest in participating.

To be eligible, communities had to meet the economic, geographic and settlement criteria that are detailed on this slide here.

[Translation]

The pilot won't apply to the Atlantic provinces, which are already participating in the Atlantic immigration pilot, nor to Quebec, which is responsible for selecting permanent immigrants in the economic category.

[English]

The pilot criteria were intended to reflect the goals of the pilot, including an approach that considered local economic development hand in hand with immigration and integration needs. Requirements included having an economic development plan—each community had to have an economic development plan—and clear job opportunities for newcomers, which would contribute to their local economy and strategic economic interests. The call-out also asked communities about themselves, about their sectoral and employment opportunities, their schools and community infrastructure, and why they wished to participate in this pilot.

While we received over 50 applications, only a select number of communities could be chosen, given the pilot nature of this initiative and the targeted approach we proposed. Consultations were undertaken with provincial and territorial partners, regional development agencies and other government departments, all who brought regional, economic or sectoral expertise to this process. Considerations also included departmental priorities—for example, the desire to increase francophone immigration—and other factors such as sectoral impact, the size and diversity of communities, as well as geographic distribution across the country.

I'll move now to slide 5.

● (1550)

[Translation]

The government will work directly with the selected communities to help them attract permanent residence applicants who best meet their unique economic development and labour force needs.

[English]

We will also help communities prepare for new immigrants as a partner with local service providers, employers and others to provide settlement services that foster welcoming communities and encourage long-term retention. This will include providing space in our levels plan for economic immigration for this pilot. This new pilot offers a pathway that communities can use to attract new immigrants.

The department itself will be providing training as well as a dedicated service channel to help communities navigate the immigration process. We also provide, as part of this pilot, that connection into the government, both federally and provincially, and connection to different agencies and departments who can provide their own expertise as well. This tailored approach will test how matching immigrants to meaningful economic opportunity and providing them and their families with settlement support encourages the attraction and attention of newcomers to smaller centres and keeps them there.

[Translation]

Let's move on to the next slide.

The pilot seeks to achieve one objective of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which is to promote the benefits of immigration across Canada.

Given the experimental nature of the pilot and how the program will run in the community, participants will be asked to collect data to assess the pilot's performance. The lessons learned from the pilot and the Atlantic immigration pilot will be used to develop future immigration programs.

[English]

With this pilot as well as the Atlantic immigration pilot, we're really testing some new approaches here with immigration—economic immigration in particular—to see how we can promote retention in the long run and really grow local economies.

Slide 7 provides a bit of an overview of the program design. In the design, there would be two stages in the application process. In the first stage, the community endorsement stage, the community would be responsible and would be empowered to assess the community fit of the candidate. Each community would have its own endorsement factors, but these would be established in partnership with IRCC. We'd consider such things as the local immigration and economic priorities of that community and how the candidate fits with its strategic interests. The slide provides some examples of what could be considered there.

Second, federal criteria would apply. When the application comes to IRCC, we'd be looking at economic establishment in particular and at factors that support the longer-term economic success of immigrants in Canada. These can include minimum language and education criteria, the need for a full-time year-round job offer and the availability of settlement funds for the immigrant and their family. Of course, federally we'd also be assessing any admissibility criteria.

Slide 8 presents the role of community economic development organizations, as well as those expected of the other partners we are engaging with as part of this pilot. A key role of the local community economic development organizations who will be our partners in administering the pilot will be to convene and coordinate local actors with both an economic and labour market focus—this could include employers, local chambers of commerce and other partners—and to look at the settlement side of the integration process for this pilot. This might mean bringing together service provider organizations who deliver settlement services in the community or local immigrant partnerships who advise and coordinate around settlement services. Really, the core of it is trying to bring together that economic development opportunity lens with the settlement and integration lens as well.

Individual community members are also expected to play a very important role—i.e., volunteering to be matched with and to mentor newcomers. We think of this as a bit of a sponsor approach to economic immigrants, which we haven't really done before, to support their integration into the local community. We like to think of it as a bit of a buddy system. Provinces and territories have also been closely engaged throughout the development of this pilot. We'll continue to consult with them as we implement it. We'll be engaging with both provinces and territories as we reach out and help train our communities who have been selected to participate.

The federal government obviously plays an important role in this as well. It's not just our department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, but also our federal partners. Certainly, regional development agencies will be key partners in providing economic development expertise on how this pilot fits with broader strategic objectives around economic development for different regions. Departments such as Agriculture Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada have also been key partners as we have developed this pilot.

The next slide sets out the expected roles and responsibilities in more of a process flow. I won't go through it in detail, but it shows where partners can best apply the expertise that they will bring to this pilot throughout the design, delivery and monitoring stages.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

The last slide shows the next steps in the implementation of the pilot.

[*English*]

The department and our partners will begin training and capacity preparedness with the selected community organizations shortly. This will continue throughout the summer and fall of this year. Once ready, community partners will implement their promotion and recruitment strategies and can begin to assess and endorse candidates for immigration into their communities. We don't expect landings under this pilot to happen until about 2020, just because of the time it will take to gear up communities to build the capacity to endorse candidates, and also because people need time to move to a new country.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to provide that brief overview of the pilot. My colleagues and I would be happy to take any questions from the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Kim.

Mr. Tabbara.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming today and sharing about the new pilot. We have heard testimony before and are looking forward to positive results from this pilot so we can further enhance our economic development in certain places that need it the most.

First, what data collection tools and measurements are in place to collect adequate data and to measure the level of success of a community-scale project?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I can begin, and then my colleague may want to jump in.

Certainly, we have our usual data collection tools here at IRCC. They include our longitudinal immigration database, which uses administrative immigration data to track who has applied, who has entered the country, who has become a permanent resident, where they intend to stay and where they file tax returns in subsequent years. With these types of tools we can assess in the long term whether or not people have stayed in the area where they originally intended to reside. It's our retention data.

That said, and as I mentioned in the presentation, I think that for this pilot we'll be looking to get some more granular and real-time data from communities themselves. As part of that partnership with community development organizations, we'd be asking them to collect some data as we go along so that we can use that to inform any evaluations of the pilot and take those lessons as we develop future programming.

**Ms. Lara Dyer (Director, Regional Economic Programs and Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** If I may just add, some of that will depend on the capacity of the communities themselves. Now that our 11 communities have been selected, we'll be starting to meet with them to determine what tools they have available. Some of them may have used tools in the past. We will be working with them to see what they're able to provide for the pilot.

From slide 6 of the presentation, you will have a sense of the kinds of outcomes and indicators we'll be looking at. In addition to the sources Natasha mentioned, we might do employer surveys or those kinds of things as well.

•(1600)

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** In your opening statement, you said, if I'm not mistaken, that nine out of 10 immigrants will leave to go to the 10 largest cities in Canada. I was looking through the slides. We've looked at the Atlantic pilot project, too, looking at retention rates. I'll concentrate on just the Atlantic coast. Do we have measurements in place? You mentioned that when communities are applying, they must have an economic development plan. Along with that, do we have a plan for the retention of immigrants to ensure they're not just leaving for the larger cities in Canada?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I'm happy to answer that. Maybe just to clarify, the statistic I mentioned was that about 80% of immigrants intend to go to our 10 largest cities in Canada; so really, upon arrival, most are not going to rural and remote communities. They're going to large urban centres.

In terms of retention, obviously once someone becomes a permanent resident they enjoy the right to mobility under our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. What this pilot tries to do, and what the Atlantic immigration pilot tries to do in a slightly different way, is to promote retention in communities by having that settlement lens right up front. Really, the intention is to encourage and incent people to develop roots in those communities and to feel welcome there, such that they will want to stay.

Certainly, with the rural and northern immigration pilot, a big part of that is also having that economic opportunity. We know that immigrants won't necessarily stay somewhere if they don't have the job they need to support themselves and their families. Ensuring that the communities selected all had very strong economic prospects for growth was a key criterion for our pilot, but it was also that there were settlement services and supports available in the communities. We do hope that things like our matching and mentoring approach with community members will also create that connection for people and their families, so that when they settle there's more of a likelihood that they will stay and be retained in those communities.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** That matching and mentoring was the buddy system you indicated in your original statement.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That's right.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Also, regarding the eligibility and selection of these communities in northern and rural areas, I know that part of their eligibility relates to their population size and to the distance between them and another major city having to be so many kilometres. Can you elaborate more on the eligibility?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Yes, I'm happy to. There's probably nothing quite so contested as the definition of what is actually "rural" in Canada. We used a definition that we thought promoted the goals of the pilot and also recognized some of the challenges that certain communities in Canada face in attracting and retaining immigrants.

There were two factors that we used. One was geographic: being a certain distance away from a major urban centre. Really, that was driven by the desire, the objective, of ensuring that bedroom communities or suburbs of larger centres were not included in the scope of the pilot, but just the communities that are eligible. There's also population size.

The third one that we factored in was the remoteness index. This is a measurement that Statistics Canada uses to measure the remoteness of communities. For example, there are some northern Ontario communities that are larger in population size, but are quite remote from our traditional immigrant-receiving urban centres. They were also considered eligible for this pilot.

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds, Mr. Tabbara.

Are you sharing your time with Ms. Zahid?

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I was, yes, but I forgot about Ms. Zahid. I apologize.

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I know it says there are bells at 4:33, but I'm wondering if we can have another chance for a second round.

**The Chair:** I think we'll probably have an opportunity to get through 20 minutes of questions, and maybe another 10 minutes after that.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Okay, I'll just run quickly through these, then.

I've been informed, or I just let the minister's office know that I copied both the parliamentary secretaries and the chair of this committee about a series of fraud cases in the Atlantic immigration pilot program. To make a long story short, the company in question was bringing people in through the program and immediately sending them from the Maritimes out to where I live in Brandon, Manitoba, which is most definitely not part of Atlantic Canada; so their status is in limbo, as you can see. I'm concerned that this sort of abuse might happen with this pilot program. If someone comes to Canada under the rural and northern immigration pilot, but leaves the designated community for employment in a major urban centre before receiving permanent residency, how will the IRCC respond?

•(1605)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** As to the specifics of the cases in the Atlantic immigration pilot, I wouldn't be able to provide anything on that other than to say that the Atlantic immigration pilot uses a slightly different model from what we're proposing here. AIP, as we like to call it, is considered an employer-driven approach: employers recruit and are responsible for retaining and promoting a settlement approach to immigration. Provinces are then responsible for endorsing candidates under the pilot to ensure that they're meeting their economic needs, and then we monitor that. That pilot is under way; we are learning lessons from it and will continue to do so.

The rural and northern immigration pilot, rather than being employer-driven, has a slightly more community-driven approach. We expect to be able to see through our community partners more directly if someone is staying or not in that interim period before they obtain permanent residence. It's possible they can arrive more quickly as temporary workers, but they will likely be on work permits, so—

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** We have a situation now where these folks have moved from the east to the west, and it's put them in jeopardy they weren't aware of with their employer; the recruiter is the one who sent them west.

I have a half a dozen questions here, Mr. Chair. These require just a yes or no answer.

I want to thank you for your presentation, by the way.

Do employers need to prove that they advertised their job postings before submitting an application for endorsement to ensure that Canadians will always have a chance for employment?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Just for clarification: are we talking about the rural and northern immigration pilot?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Yes.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Through our community partners, we'll be asking them to ensure that Canadians were considered first before approving an endorsement.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** How will they do that?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** They will work with employers in the community.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I'm wondering if the employers need to prove that they've advertised their job postings.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** This isn't the temporary foreign worker program with the same types of requirements that are imposed on employers before recruiting.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** So they won't. Okay.

Will employers need to apply for a labour market impact assessment?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** No, they would not.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Do employers need to provide these individuals with adequate, suitable and affordable housing as defined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** No, they would not. One of the factors that we asked communities to identify was the type of housing they had available.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Do employers have to pay for these individuals' private health insurance?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** No, they would not.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Do employers have to pay for the travel costs for them to come to Canada?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** No, they would not. Any permanent resident would have to have settlement funds for themselves and their families, meaning essentially their start-up costs—and that's a requirement for them to come to Canada.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Will the individual and the employer have to sign an employment contract to guide the resolution of disputes in cases where such disputes arise?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** They would need a full-time, year-round job offer. Domestic laws of application around labour and other employment would apply in that jurisdiction.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Will there be any language requirements for any of the potential employees?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Yes, there would. As part of our permanent residency criteria, we would have minimum language requirements in place.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** For those who are selected to come to Canada under this program, will they be able to bring their spouses and children with them from the beginning?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Yes, they would.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Will a spouse be given an open work permit to work with their own employer in any of these selected communities?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We expect most would be arriving as permanent residents with their families, in which case they would be able to work without a work permit.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I've come across one circumstance where the individual came to Canada under the temporary foreign worker program and brought their spouse and children. One child was able to go to high school and has now graduated, but due to his visa, he's prevented from going to university or college. Will this be the case in this pilot program?

● (1610)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** If someone comes on a temporary basis and has a study permit, that would be workable in terms of both their secondary or post-secondary education, but if they're coming as a permanent resident, which we expect most would be, then they would be able to study as anyone can in Canada.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I know that IRCC has started working on the MOUs with the 11 communities that have been selected.

Can you please table with our committee the template being used for these MOUs?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Mr. Chair, we can look into that and report back to the committee soon.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Could we get that by the end of the week, Mr. Chair? I think we're rising sometime this week.

**The Chair:** I'm not sure if it's possible.

Is the templates for the MOUs prepared for our review?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We are certainly working on them, but it's something we would want to negotiate individually with each community. There are certain standard parts of it, but I'm not sure it's in a final form to table with the committee.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** So there isn't a template; you're saying that each community can be different.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We'd want to negotiate different elements, such as the endorsement factors that were mentioned in the presentation. There would be some standard parts, but we can look into what we can table, or perhaps a description might suffice.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks.

I see in the flow chart mention of communities and employers and employees working together to bring folks in, but will you explicitly forbid individuals selected to come to Canada from paying a company in these 11 communities under this pilot program?

**The Chair:** Very briefly, please.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** As part of our training with communities, we'll be ensuring that program integrity is a key module in that training so that we can ensure that communities are apprised of possible risks or things they should be watching for.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Maguire.

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you very much.

If I heard you correctly, many of the individuals who are coming here will go to these communities with their landed status. Is that correct?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** We expect that if they're coming from abroad, they would submit their permanent resident application and could land as permanent residents when they arrive in Canada, or they might receive a temporary work permit while their PR application is being processed. If they're in Canada already, they can also apply under the pilot, but their application would be in process.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** For each of the 11 communities where this is being piloted, do you have any projected numbers on what would be deemed a success with the number of people staying in those communities?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** In terms of projected numbers, it will depend on the community. As you can see from the communities that have been selected, there is a broad diversity in terms of size, location and sectoral interests. So quantitatively, we don't have particular targets per community.

As for success in terms of retention, certainly one of the things we're trying to test with this pilot is retention in those communities. We would hope to see people stay after they arrive.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** If you don't have a projected number of how many people you would like to stay in those communities, I don't know how you're going to measure success, really.

Will five people going to one community be a success, versus, let's say, 100 people, or whatever the case may be? I would think there would need to be some sort of analysis of what the targets are in the targeted areas and then what the projected numbers are for it to be successful. Otherwise, we're kind of guessing with that. With regard to the evaluation of the program, it would be difficult to determine how the program is successful or not.

On the other issue, when we studied the Atlantic provinces, many of the people raised the issue of infrastructure and the need to ensure there is the infrastructure to retain newcomers.

With this pilot, will additional infrastructure be provided to the communities to support, hopefully, success and therefore retention?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** On the first point about targets, as I mentioned, the communities range from having populations as low as 3,000 up to 200,000, and include much more remote communities, so we have not established particular targets per community, but we—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I understand that the range will vary from community to community, but even for the different sizes of communities, you need to have some projected targets. I'm not saying you should use one target and apply it to every community

unilaterally, but rather you need to establish what some targets would look like in different communities and the different makeup of those communities. If you don't, you have no way of assessing whether or not your program is successful.

•(1615)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Going to the principle of the pilot, which is really community-driven, we would be looking at evaluating it in consultation with our community partners on whether it has met the needs they've set out in their participation in the pilot. That might be a small number or a large number of immigrants, but we'll be looking at that in co-operation with them.

For the second question around infrastructure, as you can see in the presentation, the availability of settlement supports was certainly one of the criteria we had set out in looking at communities. I will turn to my colleague, Corinne Prince, to expand on that point.

**Ms. Corinne Prince (Director General, Settlement and Integration Policy Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** For the settlement agencies that are available to provide settlement services to the participants, it's very important that they can provide the full scope of services.

I might use an example from British Columbia. In Vernon, for instance, the main organization there is the City of Vernon and its economic development department, but the Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society is the settlement provider that will provide a needs assessment and referral process right upfront to determine the specific needs of the applicants—information and orientation—as well as any language training they might need and any support services. The society would also be working very closely with the North Okanagan Social Planning Council, which is our local immigrant partner there. In addition, it would be working with the mentor who would have been assigned to the applicants and their families.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Will federal resources be provided to those communities and partners so they can in fact build up the infrastructure?

**Ms. Corinne Prince:** The funding for all of these individuals, in terms of the settlement component, is already included in the annual settlement allocations for 2019-20 and 2020-21. This particular fiscal year, the federal government is investing over \$780 million in settlement services across the country outside of Quebec. The particular service provider I mentioned would have already been provided funding for those applicants.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** It's not additional funding; it's funding for the ongoing work. Within it, you now have a pilot and then they will decide, with their regular funding, whether or not they would dedicate additional dollars toward this pilot. That raises a significant issue.



We heard from other witnesses for the Atlantic provinces study that there was a lack of supports in place for existing resettlement services for the existing community. Then, in order to attract and to retain people, they needed additional infrastructure. That is not in place for this pilot, so right off the top I am concerned about that. I'm going to flag this for you and, more to the point, for the government. In the more remote and rural communities, the infrastructure is even more scarce. If you say, "Oh well, our existing resources should provide for that", I fear we're going to set-up these communities for failure.

The idea is to attract and retain people, and right off the top people would actually have their landed status—that is to say, "If you're good enough to work, you're good enough to stay." If we acknowledge that as a principle for this pilot, why can't we acknowledge that as a principle across the board for other people with their applications?

**The Chair:** That's an interesting question, and perhaps we may get to it in further rounds of questioning.

Mr. Sarai.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you. It's good to have two areas, Vernon and the Kootenays, in British Columbia selected for this pilot project.

How do you select the applicants? Do people apply and say, "I want to go to Vernon"? Does the City of Vernon pick the applicants? Does IRCC pick the applicants? What are the criteria? Do the communities have to have  $x$  number of jobs there, or is it by economic or skilled categories where you have certain English-language requirements, and certain skills, etc.?

• (1620)

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** In selecting Vernon as one of the communities, one of the requirements was that there be, in general, many economic opportunities for newcomers there. As for the actual process on an individualized basis, it could happen in different ways. Perhaps there are employers who want to make use of the pilot, so they recruit someone from abroad who they think will be a good addition not only to their company, but also to the community. In that case, they would submit an application for endorsement to the City of Vernon, and the city would have the final call on whether or not to endorse that individual. It may be that someone's very interested in going to Vernon and will seek to find a job offer to qualify for the pilot there.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** So you would have to have a job offer in order to be eligible.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** You would, and then the city would use the endorsement factors that we work out with them to determine whether or not it's someone they wish to endorse. That doesn't stop people from using other immigration pathways that we already have in place.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** This pathway requires an employer to hire you in order to be eligible to apply.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That's right.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** What are the numbers that IRCC figures each of these rural cities would take in a year? Is there a number? Is it a collective number, or is it a per city number?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** The maximum we can accept under a pilot program is 2,750 principal applicants a year. If you add in family members, it's close to 10,000 people overall per year. That's the maximum. As was mentioned earlier, we're taking a very community-driven approach, so local considerations are first, which may mean that different communities may need different numbers of immigrants, but we'll be working closely with them.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Is it PR on arrival, or is it conditional PR after a set amount of time living in that community?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** It is not conditional PR; it's a permanent resident program.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** So they are PR on arrival.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That's right. They can arrive earlier on a work permit, if that's helpful, but their PR application has to be in to us for that to happen.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Is there any requirement to stay in that community? Is it expected that they stay there, but are there any conditional requirements to stay in that community for a set period of time?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** If you're on a work permit while your PR application is being processed, there may be geographic or employer restrictions, but if you are a permanent resident, then you enjoy the charter freedoms that other Canadians have.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** When you enter the pilot program, it's not based on a work permit program. That's if you entered a different stream. In this rural pilot, you would be accepted for a job. You would be accepted by IRCC, and then you would come and be a permanent resident on arrival.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** That's right.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Have you looked at some of the pros and cons of the Atlantic pilot project and seen how you can tweak it to improve this? Have we perhaps learned any lessons from that?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Yes, absolutely. Maybe I'll just highlight two lessons that we've learned. One is that it's important to have support for the people participating in the pilot. We have a dedicated service channel. That's something we rolled out in the Atlantic immigration pilot midway through the first year.

Right off the bat, we'll be providing communities with dedicated service channel support as part of this pilot. The other element is really to ensure that there are settlement supports and infrastructure available in these communities. That was one of the criteria, and I'll ask my colleague, Corinne Prince, to expand on that.

**Ms. Corinne Prince:** Certainly. The settlement component is an important element of the pilot. If I can look just to British Columbia and the concern that the existing settlement dollars may not go far enough, the Province of British Columbia is spending over \$100 million in settlement services within the province this year.

When we look at the two communities that have been chosen in British Columbia, the community of Vernon had 372 clients who took settlement services last calendar year, while the communities in the West Kootenay region had only a hundred clients last calendar year. Within the province, should there be some pressures, there is an ability to move some of those settlement dollars around to meet any needs and pressures that may appear.

• (1625)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Just quickly, have the cities committed to offering not just settlement services, but other services to make them feel welcome? Was that a criterion when determining which cities would take it?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Yes, it was certainly a criterion that they act as that convening power on the ground to unite that economic development lens with the settlement lens. The direct provision of services obviously happens through our federally funded service providers, but certainly bringing all the local community actors together is part of their role.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Yes, Ms. Prince.

**Ms. Corinne Prince:** We're truly blessed in Canada, given that immigration is a shared jurisdiction. Not only is the federal government providing settlement services, but so are provinces as well as many municipalities across the country. We're really looking to see if this community model will work, and if it does, we can add it to the tool box.

**The Chair:** You have only a few seconds left, Mr. Sarai.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I want to share my time with Mr. DeCoursey.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.):** My question is going to be along the lines of the approach to settlement really being an entire community-driven approach. It's not just the responsibility of the service-providing organizations, but also of the economic development agencies, the communities and the employers all working together to help with settlement and integration. Is that not the goal and what these communities indicated on their application, that they could settle, as an entire community, newcomers when they arrive?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Absolutely, I think we have—

**The Chair:** That's perfect. Thank you very much.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks.

So this pilot program isn't like the Atlantic one, in which you have to be there for a certain length of time before you apply for permanent residency? In this one, you are a permanent resident as soon as you get the job?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Maybe I'll just clarify that the Atlantic immigration pilot is also a permanent residence pilot. It is based on permanent residence; it's not a temporary residence program.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** So it's not a “stay there for six months and apply” thing. It's not like the temporary foreign worker program.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** No, there is an opportunity to come on a temporary basis while you're preparing your application under that program, but you need a letter of support from the province to do that.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** One of the things Manitoba has—and it's been acknowledged here—is a pretty decent provincial nominee program. I think you looked at that yourselves.

Instead of a new pilot program being set up, could it have been set up so that there were just more spots made available to the Manitoba provincial nominee program? Was that given any consideration? Why wouldn't that sort of thing work?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I think Manitoba is our oldest provincial nominee partner, and it has done amazing things in this space.

The provincial nominee program overall has increased substantially over the last few years in order to give provinces and territories that opportunity to use their immigration programs for their own regional economic development needs. To complement that, we really wanted to test something a little bit different. We started with the Atlantic immigration pilot. That's ongoing, and we're learning lessons every day on that one.

This one is doing something slightly different, and we hope we're going to take the lessons learned from both pilots, from what provinces and territories are doing, and really share those lessons among us so that we can see what is really the best approach to using immigration for economic and social benefits.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** From the flow chart you've given us on the rural and northern immigration pilot, from the time they start being selected and communities want the individuals to work, or a business does, what sort of time frame is there to get to the point where, on this job template of yours, you're looking at the key with the house on it and the words, “Candidate obtains Permanent Residence”? There is a period of time in there, then, that is required to make sure they meet all of the criteria first before they get their permanent residency.

I can see they're permanent residents once they get the job, but there has been a lot of background material here to get to that point. How different is that, then, from what has already been set up?

**Ms. Lara Dyer:** I think that would really depend on the communities themselves. Some of them have some experience already with immigration processes, and others have less. We really want to work with them and not rush them along in their process, so that will depend a little bit on the community. They're all anxious to get going, and we are committed to providing them the support they need.

I think Natasha said earlier that we're not expecting any landings until 2020, but we are hoping that some of the communities will start receiving applications sometime in the fall.

• (1630)

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** One of the criteria is the language levels, and I am very worried that.... My colleague just asked, and I'll ask the question for her again. It's just the situation that the present resources are stretched to the limit and we're now going to put more of these into these 11 communities. You're saying there is no more availability for help in those areas, or will these communities be given some more support in relation to the fact that they are a pilot project?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** Maybe I can give a bit of an overview of the types of support these communities will have. From our department in particular they will have the training that we provide. They will have the support and contact with us that can also connect them into the rest of the government.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Just for clarity, is that after they become permanent residents, or before?

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** This is to help the communities administer the pilot.

For the individuals coming through, certainly the community partner will be there to connect them with the right supports on the ground. As my colleague explained in response to a previous question, there is flexibility for us to use settlement funding that's actually in place to respond to needs as they arise.

Would you like an elaboration on that, Mr. Chair?

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** We only have about 15 seconds to go, so if Ms. Prince could provide us with a slight elaboration, we can then move to Madame Lapointe.

**Ms. Corinne Prince:** I think it's important to know that, depending on the job offer and where that job is in the national occupation classification system, the language requirement for the individual in this pilot varies. For national occupation classification system level C and D jobs, we are requiring a Canadian language benchmark 4 level. If we go to the higher-skilled level, NOC level A, we are requiring a Canadian language benchmark 6. It's kind of a varying scale, depending on the job required and where that fits into the classification system.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Prince.

The last opportunity goes to Madam Lapointe.

[Translation]

**Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.):** How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You can ask questions until the bell rings, probably in a few minutes.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses, who gave very interesting presentations. I'm not a regular member of this committee. I'm replacing someone. However, for two and a half years, I sat on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, where one issue was francophone immigration outside Quebec.

I thought that the francophone immigration target was 4.5%, but my colleague told me that it was 4.4%. You said that you selected 11 of the 50 communities that applied based on the francophonie, diversity and geography.

What's your francophone immigration target for these 11 communities?

**Ms. Corinne Prince:** It was a factor, of course. We ensure that French-speaking immigrants and refugees can settle and integrate into francophone communities across Canada, outside Quebec, and that the communities can provide all the necessary services to help them.

You may be aware that Canadian Heritage recently launched an action plan for official languages. The plan allocates \$40.8 million over five years to our department for francophone immigration initiatives, to ensure that immigrants can access services in the communities where they want to settle.

French-speaking immigrants must also be able to take language training, not only in English, but also in French, if they want a job that requires a higher level of French.

**Ms. Natasha Kim:** I'll add something.

The selected communities include Timmins, which has a large francophone population. I think that 53% of its population is francophone. There's also Moose Jaw, a host community that provides services in French.

• (1635)

**Ms. Lara Dyer:** I'll add another point.

We've been discussing another aspect with the communities. We're asking them about their targets and how they want to achieve them.

**Ms. Linda Lapointe:** We were told that the overall target was 4.4% francophone immigration outside Quebec. Have you selected cities, such as Sudbury, Timmins or North Bay, based on their French-speaking population? You said that 53% of the population of Timmins is francophone. With this pilot project, do you expect to see at least 53% francophone immigration, to prevent the erosion of francophone communities outside Quebec?

**Ms. Lara Dyer:** All the communities were selected because they have the ability to support French-speaking immigrants as a result of their francophone population. This will certainly help us meet the national targets, which we'll establish by discussing the matter with the communities concerned.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, everyone.

I'd like to thank the officials for coming today and providing us with this briefing on the announced 11 new rural communities that will participate in the rural northern immigration pilot.

For committee members, this will now adjourn our 167th meeting and our last regularly scheduled meeting of the 42nd Parliament. I invite members to stay to meet a German delegation that is here to

discuss the integration of immigrants and refugees into the labour market, and how to best attract a skilled labour force to Canada, including persons with disabilities in this challenge. If you could let the clerk know if you intend to stay, we can arrange the room accordingly.

The meeting is adjourned.

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