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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Wednesday, June 14, 2017**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj**



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• (1610)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)):** Welcome back. Pursuant to the order of reference received from the House on Wednesday, November 2, 2016, the committee will resume its study under motion M-39, regarding immigration to Atlantic Canada.

We have with us today, from the University of New Brunswick, Mr. Ted McDonald, professor of economics.

By video conference from Halifax, from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, we have Mr. Kevin Lacey, director, Atlantic.

Welcome gentlemen.

Mr. McDonald, the floor is yours. You have seven minutes.

**Professor James Ted McDonald (Professor of Economics, University of New Brunswick):** Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today and to share some of my thoughts on immigration in Atlantic Canada. I am a labour economist. I have dealt with big data issues for most of my research life, and so much of what I'm going to be talking about today is data-related.

The challenges of an aging population have been really well documented and include decreased local labour supply, decreased local demand for goods and services, decreased tax revenue from most sources, and difficulty providing core services, such as education and health care, among many others.

It is also well known that the Atlantic provinces have on average an older, less skilled, and less healthy population than other Canadian provinces, with higher unemployment rates and lower employment rates. New Brunswick, for example, had an unemployment rate of 8.4% and an employment rate of 56.4% in May 2017, while 19.5% of the population are age 65 or over. The numbers for Canada overall are 6.6%, 61.5%, and 16.5%.

One common response is to promote immigration into the Atlantic provinces, including into the less populated areas as a way to arrest these trends. There is no doubt that immigration is the key driver of continuing population growth in Canada and a crucial component for aggregate economic growth. Immigration itself is not a panacea for Atlantic Canada. It requires an understanding of both the underlying demographic and economic environment and of what motivates people to stay or to move.

On the first point, one key aspect is that Atlantic Canadian provinces also have relatively high percentages of population in rural areas, outside of cities and larger towns. New Brunswick is 48% rural, compared with 19% for Canada overall. The last time Ontario and Quebec were 48% rural was in 1921. Even Saskatchewan, with 33% of its population in rural areas, last had a 48% rural population in 1976.

A second aspect of Atlantic Canada that perhaps is not as well known is that there is a key distinction between the cities and the rest of the Atlantic provinces. If we focus on the cities in Atlantic Canada and compare them with smaller cities elsewhere, say, cities of less than 200,000 people in other provinces, we find that Atlantic cities are doing quite well. For example, in May 2017, the unemployment rate in the Moncton, New Brunswick, census metropolitan area or CMA was 6.1%, and in Saint John 5.6%, compared with 6.7% in Peterborough and 5.6% in Abbotsford. Only 15% of the population of the Halifax CMA is age 65 or over, and 17.6% of the Saint John population is 65 or over, compared with 22.3% for Trois-Rivières and 19.1% for Thunder Bay.

The cities are growing steadily in population as well. Between 2006 and 2016, Fredericton city, where I live, grew by 14.9%, Charlottetown by 12.5%, and Halifax by 8.3%, although Saint John city showed no change. High provincial unemployment rates arise from high rural unemployment rates in Atlantic Canada, for example, 11.8% in P.E.I. and 12.3% in New Brunswick. By way of contrast, the unemployment rate of rural Quebec is 5.4% as of May 2017.

The Atlantic provinces are urbanizing, and immigration on its own will not solve the challenges of rural areas and small towns in these provinces.

Immigrant attraction and retention are complex issues. Much research has gone into understanding what motivates people to move in and move on. One indisputable factor is the importance of the availability of employment. If there is demand in an area, either for employees by firms looking to hire, or for goods and services that are currently undersupplied, or both, then people, both Canadian-born and immigrants, will be attracted to the area.

Employment opportunities may attract people, but they may not be enough to keep them. There would also need to be suitable employment opportunities for spouses, an issue that's often overlooked. Amenities and quality of life are also very important.

For immigrants, of course, there are additional challenges. Employment opportunities may abound, but if credentials are not recognized, and especially if language proficiency is lacking, then jobs will go unfilled. Research has shown that so-called ethnic networks of one's own cultural, linguistic, or ethnic group can play an important role in retaining immigrants. Since Atlantic Canadian provinces do not have a relatively high proportion of overseas-born—around 4%, compared with 20% for Canada overall—these networks can be small.

I'll take a bit of an aside into some statistical discussion. One of the key metrics we look at, one on which New Brunswick is often criticized, is retention rates.

Statistics on retention of immigrants may vary substantially by how retention is defined and by data source. For example, retention statistics calculated based on landing records from IRCC linked to tax records will understate true retention since a substantial number of immigrants whose stated province of arrival is an Atlantic province will, in fact, never land in that province. One study for New Brunswick found that about 67% of provincial nominees whose intended destination was New Brunswick filed tax in New Brunswick after a year, only 67%. However, recent work by my team, using provincial medicare registry data, finds that five years after registering for medicare, more than 70% of immigrants from the U.K. and Europe, 67% of the immigrants from Asia, and about 60% of immigrants from the Mideast and Africa are still resident in the New Brunswick medicare system. It should be noted that about 80% of immigrants to New Brunswick are choosing to locate in one of the three main cities.

On increasing immigration to the region, others, I'm sure, have a lot more to offer on this question than I do, but I would like to emphasize that settlement agencies, integration policies, welcoming communities, and related services, though vitally important for retention, are of little value if there are not also economic opportunities for immigrants.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, please.

**Prof. James Ted McDonald:** On the Atlantic pilot, one of the major criticisms of the earlier points-based system for federal skilled migrants was the immigration selection process was independent of the immigrant finding a job, meaning many skilled immigrants arrived in Canada to find their credentials were not recognized. I think the Atlantic immigration pilot goes some way to addressing that issue by linking employers with potential employment and immigrants.

Why are these jobs not being filled locally when unemployment is relatively high? There are two reasons: geographic mismatch and skills mismatch. Demand is likely to be high in the cities where unemployment rates are lower. High unemployment rates in rural areas arise from an older, less skilled workforce who have lost jobs in forestry and fisheries and whose skills are not readily transferred.

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

**Prof. James Ted McDonald:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lacey, you have seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Kevin Lacey (Director, Atlantic, Canadian Taxpayers Federation):** Thanks for having me.

For the past 27 years, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has been fighting across Canada for three fundamental principles: lower taxes, less waste, and more accountable government.

I want to thank the committee for inviting our organization to speak to you today. Over the last few weeks you've heard from many in Atlantic Canada who have outlined the problems all too well. Our population has declined; we are aging, and the cost to provide public services is becoming unaffordable. The solution that many have put forward is to find ways to bring as many new immigrants to the region as possible. This is a laudable goal, but it won't work in isolation from other changes.

Consider this. Between 2011 and 2016 over 31,000 more Atlantic Canadians have packed up and moved to other provinces in Canada than have moved into the region. Here's the problem: if we can't keep native-born workers who have roots here at home, how will we ever retain newcomers who are mobile and can find better opportunities in other parts of Canada? Of course we won't. It's all about the economy, and the Atlantic economy is failing under high taxes, excessive regulations, a failure to explore our natural resources, and costly bureaucracy.

Fix the economy and we can attract thousands home, as well as others from around the world. We are not economically depressed because of our geography or because we possess a culture of defeat. No, it's because the economic policies promoted by the Atlantic provinces and Ottawa, sometimes with the best of intentions, have failed to deliver the results they were intended to. Let me tell you a story about what I mean.

In this region, we have one of the highest unemployment rates. Our young people are moving west because they can't find good, well-paying jobs. At any one time, we have almost 100,000 people collecting employment insurance cheques, yet in this region, we are bringing temporary foreign workers into areas that already have lots of people without work. Why is this? The problem in part is created by a combination of the liberal use of the temporary foreign worker program and the abolishment of changes that tighten the employment insurance rules by both the Harper and Chrétien governments.

Fish plants and other businesses have responded to the labour shortages by demanding more temporary foreign workers. Most immigrants have a path to citizenship and enjoy the same economic freedoms as Canadians, including the right to accept a better-paying job. Temporary foreign workers have no similar bargaining power and are unable to climb the economic ladder. These workers have one option: to work for the company that sponsored them at the pay on offer or to return home.

Former New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna came before this very committee and argued that TFWs needed a path to citizenship. I agree, but a temporary foreign worker on a path wouldn't be temporary and they would instead be like other immigrants. As it stands, the TFW program is un-Canadian. It is ill-liberal and immoral because it creates a permanent underclass of workers.

The TFW policy also drives down wages and causes more people who are looking for decent paycheques to move to central and western Canada, exacerbating the problems that exist. This in turn reinforces the argument that some Atlantic employers say they cannot find enough local workers, and it increases pressure on Ottawa to further increase the number of TFWs.

The solution is obvious. If workers aren't willing to work for the pay that companies offer, companies need to raise wages and pay a fair wage. It's time we prioritized jobs for Canadians and tightened the rules for temporary foreign workers. This would force companies that right now aren't paying a decent wage to increase their salaries to a true market rate. This would result in more unemployed Canadians being attracted to do the work and earning a decent paycheque doing it.

There are other parts to this. The government should look for ways to incentivize work and to get people off EI. The Liberal government eliminated the requirement for frequent and repeat EI claimants to accept work at slightly less pay and to consider marginally longer commutes to work. These changes were put in place to reverse the growing shortage of workers in areas of the country with high unemployment rates.

Unemployed Canadian workers have choices. They can work for low wages that are kept low by TFW policy, work elsewhere, or work for a few weeks a year and collect EI. In effect, companies are competing with the EI program in order to convince people to come in. Fixing EI is where Ottawa should focus its policy reforms, instead of making it easier to bring in TFWs.

• (1620)

Finally, we need to grow our economy. Our region is uncompetitive when it comes to taxes. An individual in Nova Scotia, for example, earning about \$60,000 a year pays \$1,500 more in income tax alone than the national average, not to mention the region has some of the highest sales taxes, corporate taxes and other fees.

In summary, there are three recommendations from our organization.

One, tighten the rules for permitting temporary foreign workers in areas of high unemployment. This policy would force companies to raise their pay and do more to hire unemployed Canadians who are currently collecting EI.

Two, as former Liberal Premier Frank McKenna said, reform the employment insurance program, and reinstate reforms by previous governments, both Liberal and Conservative, to encourage frequent EI users to transition back to the labour force. It's all about the economy. We need to promote pro-growth strategies that lower taxes and grow the economy. People don't leave home when they have jobs and opportunity. Solving Atlantic Canada's demographic problems with immigration is just part of the solution—

**The Chair:** Thirty seconds, please.

**Mr. Kevin Lacey:** —but it won't work on its own. We need our friends and family who have gone west to move home. We need our governments to bring in policies designed to grow our economy and realize our true potential.

Thank you.

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

Now we go to Ms. Ludwig for seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.):** Thank you, both, for your testimony this afternoon.

I'm going to start with Professor McDonald. As we have discussed, I too taught at UNB. In my case it was the MBA program in international trade. I had a great deal of experience working with international students, and so many of them wished that they could have stayed and looked for opportunities in the local communities.

One of the things that I hear clearly from both testimonies is that immigration is not the only answer, but I do believe, based on where I live and the area that I represent, that it is part of the solution. If we look, for example, at Mr. Lacey's comments about tightening EI reform and also tightening the temporary foreign workers program, I need look no further than 2014, when the TFW program was tightened. The program did have issues but when that program was tightened, Patrel, for example, exported a whole processing line to Massachusetts, never to return. That did not create jobs. In fact, it impacted the industry.

If we're looking at opportunities, Professor McDonald, in terms of systemic or structural challenges, what would you say, given the situation in rural coastal communities, about the challenges in transportation, affordable accessible child care and skills training?

**Prof. James Ted McDonald:** The rural issue in New Brunswick is a big challenge and, as I mentioned, we have some of the highest rates of rural residence of anywhere in Canada. The transition to a more urban economy is something that has been really slow to develop in Atlantic Canada, and this is causing a lot of challenges.

So I think, on its own, with an immigration solution to encourage immigrants to move to small towns to settle, if there isn't the steady ongoing employment prospects for themselves and their families, and the social networks and the support networks, they're not going to stay, just like the local youth are leaving our rural areas. It's just not an attractive place, so I think what has been happening, in terms of economic policy in the province, has probably not been that effective, and we can see that from the stats. The populations of these smaller places continue to decline.

To address this, I think we need to move beyond an immigration policy. We need to move beyond a regional economic development policy. We need a strategy that looks at what the real challenges are, what the potential is for these small communities, and it's not going to be a return to the status quo, I feel. But there are lots of other opportunities for these smaller communities to develop in tourism or any other aspects, because the forestry and the fisheries aren't coming back.

• (1625)

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Thank you.

I'm looking, for example, at the area I represent, New Brunswick Southwest, which is very coastal in many areas, deep in the heart of aquaculture, fisheries. We have Connors Bros., Ganong Bros., Paturel, and Cooke's. Certainly some of the work is seasonal, but some of the areas, I would like to stress to both of you, would be not only in the lower-skilled areas but also in the supervisory area.

A lot of work is being done on the ground. For example, in the transportation area there is the Rural Lynx project that we're trying to get off the ground locally. If we look at affordable, accessible child care, the government recently announced \$7 billion for that. The other area truly is in skills training. It's so easy, I think, to sit in Ottawa when policies get developed and not take in the geographic parameters when it comes to making policy. It's so easy to sit back and say that a person within a 100-kilometre radius should be taking those jobs. If there's no transportation, there are limitations. These are coastal communities. Many of the jobs are on islands.

In the meantime, when we're all fighting about policies and the best one to fit in, we have employers who are not able to expand or grow. One thing I clearly hear from employers in my region is the opportunity they see in strengthening the structural barriers, and also increasing immigration that is employer-led on specific tasks, specific skills, and growing the two. First and foremost, New Brunswickers would always be the first option.

I can also give an anecdote, as I hear often from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation about cutting taxes. As a small business owner in the riding, even to cut corporate taxes, Mr. Lacey, does not increase our sales. We need more people in our province, more people to be buying, more policies for being more innovative and more diversified. Immigration is an important aspect of that, and there could even be opportunities for migration.

In terms of the immigration policy itself, Mr. Lacey, are you speaking on behalf of your five or six members or did you get a mandate and a policy set forward by all your membership?

**Mr. Kevin Lacey:** I appreciate the question put forward by the member, plus I know her area very well.

I know the issue she speaks about at Paturel very well also. A job ad for Paturel last year advertised jobs at \$11.25 an hour to \$13.95 an hour. These are very low-paying jobs, and so defending a policy that promotes workers from elsewhere coming to take jobs in her riding, which has a very high unemployment rate—

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Mr. Lacey, I am certainly not promoting foreign workers to take local jobs.

**Mr. Kevin Lacey:** Could I just finish? The honourable member raised the issue.

You don't have to believe me on this issue. The Auditor General, who's from her home province, raised this in his own report. He said very clearly that 80% of fish processors are laying off workers at the same time as they're using workers from the temporary foreign worker program, which is why there needs to be reform.

As for our—

**Ms. Karen Ludwig:** Excuse me, I'm just going to cut in because I don't have much time left, Mr. Lacey.

In terms of the temporary foreign worker program, we'd be better off to drop the "temporary" and just have a foreign worker program where there is a path to citizenship, and also help those who don't.... Eleven dollars an hour is not very much money to live on, I agree 100%, but so many people in my communities also focus on the opportunities for skills development and are looking forward to that.

If we look at manufacturing, it has doubled since the signing of NAFTA, but technology has increased exponentially, and we've not kept up with that. I know many people in my area are looking at opportunities that are technology-based, less so in filling positions on food-processing lines. In the meantime, we still have to help our companies move forward, and we have to help our schools expand, our communities stay alive and grow.

Thank you.

• (1630)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ludwig. Your time is up.

Mr. Tilson, you have seven minutes, please.

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to introduce a motion to the committee that is relevant to this study, and which I would like to spend some time on. I hope other members will as well.

This study of immigration to Atlantic Canada is most important. Also, there are numerous motions that have been moved at this committee which have not yet been voted on. There are two studies which require the committee to finalize reports. There are few remaining days left in the sitting of this Parliament. The Minister of Immigration has only appeared before this committee once. He hasn't talked about this issue, Atlantic Canada, nor has he talked about other matters of urgent public policy important for us to consider.

Therefore, I move:

That the Committee reschedule the remaining meetings on the study related to Atlantic Canadian immigration and that the Committee hold hearings in Atlantic Canada in the summer months; and that the remainder of the time this Committee has in this sitting be used to complete our two outstanding reports and have all moved motions voted upon.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. David Tilson:** If I may proceed, Mr. Chairman, I, first of all, want to say—

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, it may be a clarification, but I don't believe we received notice of motion with respect to this matter.

**The Chair:** This particular motion does not require notice because it deals with the matter at hand. It is in order.

Please proceed.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to say to all members of the committee, because I get the impression that you think members of the opposition don't care about Atlantic Canada.... I just want to tell you a bit about my personal background which will show that I do care about Atlantic Canada.

By way of some background, I did my undergraduate degree at the University of New Brunswick. I spent a number of years in Fredericton getting that degree. One of my staff here in Ottawa is a young woman from Moncton who just recently, this past Saturday, got married in Fredericton. My late wife was from Moncton, as well. My wife has relatives buried in Cape Breton. My daughter owns a summer home in Shediac, New Brunswick. My son is a graduate of Dalhousie University. Obviously, I have a number of relatives in New Brunswick. I care about New Brunswick, and I care about the rest of Atlantic Canada.

Having been on this committee for a number a years, I certainly recognize the need for greater immigration to Atlantic Canada. I think we need to spend more time on the many issues that are raised, particularly by the gentleman who is on TV now. He raised some interesting issues, and they're complicated issues.

We need to spend some time in the maritime provinces, in the Atlantic Canadian provinces, to go over the complicated issues of unemployment. Atlantic Canada has the highest unemployment in Canada. How will that affect immigrants coming to the maritime provinces? I think we need to meet some of the.... The Atlantic provinces have a great reputation, perhaps a better reputation than some of the other provinces, in welcoming, for example, Syrian refugees to Canada.

I'd like to hear the views of some of those refugees who have come to Atlantic Canada. Are they getting jobs? I would like to hear from people who have been resident in Atlantic Canada for some time and how new immigrants coming to Atlantic Canada will affect the jobs.

There are very complicated issues. We've heard some testimony already that shows there are problems particularly in the rural communities. Obviously, there is a need for, as my friend across the way mentioned, temporary workers. That's true, but I expect we also have a need for full-time employment.

I think the best thing—that's why the motion, Mr. Chairman—is that we spend some time going to Atlantic Canada. The clerk has already prepared a budget to go there. We've done that. There's still time to make these arrangements. Let's go to Atlantic Canada. Let's spend a little bit of overtime for these people and get our other business done here before we rise.

There's the study on immigration consultants that we're very close to concluding. Let's finish that. It has a huge impact across Canada on the whole immigration system, the problems that we have with immigration consultants. That report is very close to being finished, but if we keep going the way we are, it's not going to get finished before the summer. We may have to continue on in the fall.

There's the LGBTQ study. We've heard the testimony on this. I think we're very close to coming to an agreed-upon report. This needs to be done to protect the world's most vulnerable. We can't just let it lie. The Liberals are raising the pride flag on the Hill right now. Why don't we do something? Why don't we finish this study?

● (1635)

Of course the Atlantic study is important, and I think we need to go there, but these two issues speak for themselves. We should deal with these in the few days that are left before we rise for the summer.

There have been a number of motions that have been made, Mr. Chairman, which haven't been voted on. My friend from the New Democratic Party has made a motion. Michelle Rempel has made a motion. We haven't voted on those motions, the motions dealing with the border crossing crisis, the issue of illegal people coming to the United States and not following the rules that we have in this country for allowing—

**The Chair:** Mr. Tilson, if I could have your indulgence for a second. I've been told that Mr. McDonald has a flight to catch, and he would need to leave at 4:40 p.m., which is right about now.

Mr. McDonald, thank you so much for your testimony, truncated as it is. We appreciate it, and you're free to leave. Thank you.

**Prof. James Ted McDonald:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chair:** Mr. Lacey, I believe that, if you'd like, we can still have you on video conference for the next 20 minutes. There is no guarantee that you'll have an opportunity to speak, but you're free to stay for the next 20 minutes.

Mr. Tilson.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Chair, I mentioned the border crossing crisis. There was a motion that was made on that, and the debate was promptly adjourned by the government members. At the very least, we should be able to vote on this topic, even if we don't have debate. At the very least, let's vote on it, as opposed to just adjourning it into that never-never land, and it never gets heard of again. The same goes with the appeals process for citizenship fraud. Let's vote on these things. Motions are made, and then the government members simply adjourn them, and they're never to be heard of again.

I hope on this motion I've moved now, Mr. Chairman, that we have an opportunity to vote on it. Going to Atlantic Canada is important. We're spending a lot of money bringing people up here. Why don't we go down there?

• (1640)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I think Mr. Lacey is trying to talk to somebody. I don't know if he's trying to talk to Mr. Tilson. You might want to ask.

**The Chair:** Mr. Sarai, I'm being told that he's speaking with the technician. He's not trying to speak with us.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I wanted to make sure he was listening to you. I didn't want to—

**Mr. David Tilson:** I know he is, Mr. Sarai. He's listening very intently. I see his eyes looking at me.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Okay, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** We all are, Mr. Tilson. You have our undivided attention, sir.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Yes, indeed.

I don't have any pages. I have the motion before me, which I hope you'll listen to, because I think it's a very reasonable proposal for us to go to Atlantic Canada in the upcoming summer months.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to Mr. Sarai, I hope you'll be able to travel from British Columbia to Atlantic Canada and hear these very complicated, serious issues about the economy, how we are going to improve the economy to take new immigrants, and the issues new immigrants have when they come to this country.

You've spoken many times very eloquently. I appreciate the experience you have on this topic, and hopefully we'll hear more of that if you agree to go to Atlantic Canada. There is the issue of language, the issue of education, and the issue of preparing new immigrants to perform. It's true that we need temporary workers in the maritime provinces, but we certainly need experts and well-educated people as well. I think, obviously, many of the new immigrants who are in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal are people we need in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Sarai, I hope you will listen to those comments, and I hope that when you have an opportunity to respond, you will support this motion to go to Atlantic Canada. I hope you don't do what you've done in the past, which is to simply adjourn the debate with no discussion and no vote, and have it just disappear.

I think the people of Atlantic Canada want us to go down there. They want this committee to go down there, whether it's the full committee or a smaller form of the committee. I hope you and your colleagues will agree with that so that we can go down and hear first-hand about some of the major issues on education. The whole issue of education and the universities does get complicated. We need to find out how private enterprise can get involved in that. We haven't had too much testimony on that. What a great opportunity to go down to some of the cities in Atlantic Canada and hear from some of the private companies that are down there as to what they would expect, and what requirements they would have to retain new immigrants to help settle the areas.

Also, I think we need to hear from the people in the rural parts of Atlantic Canada, to hear more of what they have to say about how the economy can improve there, and whether they're able to accept new immigrants down there. There's no question that there's an issue. Will jobs be displaced as a result of new immigrants? Quite frankly, I think that the provincial governments, the federal government, and private enterprise can do things to encourage the economy in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland... and who have I left out?

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.):** It was P.E.I.

**Mr. David Tilson:** How could I leave out Prince Edward Island? It was just a slip. I love going there and seeing Anne Shirley.

I hope the government members will support this and that we will proceed to accept this and go down to Atlantic Canada to hear some of what the people have to say.

I guess the other issue is why the government members are simply adjourning these debates on these topics—the topics of the border crossing crisis, the appeals process for citizenship fraud. These matters can be dealt with here promptly.

We have two reports to finish. I don't know how many days—maybe no one knows how many days—we're going to be here, but hopefully we will have at least a couple of days in which this committee can finish both of those reports, which are just on the cusp of being completed and concerning which, Mr. Chairman, you can proudly attend before the House of Commons to make the report on behalf of the committee.

The other issue is, as I indicated in the preamble of the motion, that the new minister has appeared, I think, only once before this committee. He won't come to talk about estimates. The government is going to be spending some more money on immigration. What is he prepared to do, as the minister, to deal with the issue that's before us now? What is he prepared to recommend to the government concerning programs? There has been mention of pilot programs. What is he prepared to do to encourage an increase in the economy of Atlantic Canada and to encourage new immigrants to come to Atlantic Canada?



The problem is, of course, that most immigrants, when they come to this country, want to go to those areas in which immigrants have already settled, and not a lot of them have settled in Atlantic Canada. That's one reason this motion is before us. They go to Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and I don't know about other areas, but generally to the major cities in the rest of Canada.

Why aren't they going to Halifax? Why aren't they going to Charlottetown? Why aren't they going to Fredericton? I suppose the people who are there can tell us first-hand, which is another reason I believe we should go there.

Mr. Chairman, I strongly recommend that the committee review this motion. I can't believe it's going to take much movement. I mean, they're the ones who brought the motion. The work has been done by the clerk. She has a budget that's ready to go. We could go in the summer months, with agreed-upon dates in the summer months. I'm sure witnesses would much rather that we go there to talk about these complicated issues than that they come up here or appear by television.

The other question, of course, which I can't emphasize more, is why can't we finish these two studies? Why can't we finish the LGBTQ study? The testimony is in. We always study these matters in camera. We've had witnesses on these issues who are crying out for us to do something, crying out for this committee to make recommendations to Parliament and indeed to the department to do something.

There are rumours flying around this place that we may prorogue. Well, if we do and we haven't done these studies, they will die. After all the testimony that has been given on those two studies, they will die. I suppose it's possible that the committee could make a motion to have them come forward again in the fall. I suppose that's possible—it has happened before—but right now, if they prorogue, those studies would die.

•(1645)

Those people who have come to this committee and given very emotional testimony, particularly on the LGBTQ study, will be most upset that we allowed this matter not to have priority with the committee, and instead proceeded with the Atlantic study, which is most important. That's why I am recommending, Mr. Chairman, that we go to Atlantic Canada to hear some more testimony with respect to Atlantic Canada and with respect to the problems in Atlantic Canada.

The same goes for the immigration consultants study. We've heard a lot of testimony about that, and it will be a shame if that study just dies. That's what's going to happen if we continue on bringing people from the Maritimes, from Atlantic Canada, here, and allow the immigration consultants study to die as a result of prorogation. Maybe we're not going to prorogue, but someone starts these rumours. Mr. Chairman, you've heard these rumours.

•(1650)

**The Chair:** I've certainly not started them.

**Mr. David Tilson:** No, you haven't started it, but....

**The Chair:** We mention it many times.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Indeed you have, but it's something we have to keep in mind because the immigration consultants study has had a huge impact on all of Canada. You look at the issues that have been before us, and members have whispered to me that I don't care about Atlantic Canada. Well, that's just false, and I've given the reasons that I do care about Atlantic Canada. I wasn't born there, but I lived there. I was educated there. I am aware of the issues because my family still owns property there, and I'm concerned about the economy of Atlantic Canada, as are all of us in this committee.

I believe we could quickly put forward a plan as to which cities we could go to to cover as many areas as possible. I don't know how many meetings it would take, but if we went down there, we could spend considerable time hearing from the people from Atlantic Canada. Do they want new immigrants? Do they want to improve the economy? Do they want to have more jobs? How can we do that? How can we receive immigrants and welcome them into the committee? They're experts on that. They have a great reputation now. How can the economy be improved? Sure, we had Premier McKenna show up, and he gave us some comments, but I'd like to hear from the people. I'd like to hear from the residents of Atlantic Canada and what they have to say. People who are working there, people who are unemployed, I'd like to hear what they have to say. I'd like to hear from the temporary workers who work in the lobster factories. What's going to happen to them? How can we improve those jobs, and continue to improve them? If we don't do something, there's the issue of whether they'll be going on welfare. With all due respect to the witnesses before us now, it's very fine to hear from these experts, but I'd like to hear from the people.

Ms. Rempel has a few words.

**The Chair:** Mr. Tilson, several times you asked the chair for clarification as to why very important reports have not been completed. There's a procedural explanation. As is the opposition's right to filibuster, that is a right that you have, but—

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Chairman, I'm not filibustering. I'm asking that we go to—

**The Chair:** —that has impacted.... I'm just providing a clarification for you—

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Chairman, I question your words on that. I don't think you need to say that. What we're trying to do is to give the best effect of this study by going to Atlantic Canada to hear testimony from Atlantic Canada.

**The Chair:** I assumed that was genuine questioning of the chair to provide clarification.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Oh, no, I'd never do that, Mr. Chairman. I have the greatest respect for you and I'd never do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Rempel.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you.

All right, here we are, and I'm looking at my colleagues and their staff from a point of wanting to do something that resembles work.

What I've found in my time as opposition critic for immigration is that the immigration file involves some legislative and macro-level things that we need to look at, such as the study that's before us today, but it's also really process heavy.

A lot of the things that come before us in terms of problems.... If we all agree that it's not a matter of if Canada does immigration but a question of how, then we need to look at process issues when they come up.

I don't think anyone here could argue that this year, we've seen some pretty challenging situations involving process, in terms of immigration policy in Canada. Without getting into partisan rhetoric one way or the other on how we think process should go, there is a legitimate need for study on some of these issues.

On the motion that my colleague, Jenny Kwan, raised with regard to border crossings—I don't have the exact wording—the reality is that while we might differ on how that process should look, a woman froze to death trying to cross into our country this year, and we've had no study on the process by which that happened. I think the border crossing issue is probably one of the top public policy issues that we've seen in Canada this year. Ms. Kwan moved a motion on this, and debate was adjourned. I'd like us to have an opportunity to see that voted on.

Similarly, we spent a lot of time on Bill C-6 this week, with regard to the appeals process for citizenship revocation in cases of fraud. I moved a motion to have study on that in committee, and the best way to do that. That was not voted on either. Debate was adjourned.

The minister has only appeared before the committee once. He hasn't even appeared before committee on this.

When all of these process issues happen, we have to ask ourselves, as opposition members what our avenues and ways are of being able to address these issues to do what we're tasked to do by the Canadian public. The answer is to question the government's management of these types of processes and policies.

While there was unanimous consent in the House to—

• (1655)

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Please state your point of order, Ms. Lockhart.

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** I just want to read the definition of “filibuster”, which is, “an action such as a prolonged speech that obstructs progress in a legislative assembly—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I have a point of order.

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** —while not technically contravening the required procedures.”

**The Chair:** Ms. Lockhart, yes, you've gained the floor. You're engaging in debate and not a point of order, but thank you for attempting to be helpful.

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Let's move on to the matter at hand, the Atlantic Canadian immigration study. This, to me, is a matter of.... It's a longitudinal study. We unanimously supported in the House of Commons the motion that my colleague, Ms. Lockhart, brought, to bring this study to committee, but we didn't unanimously support the length of the study, and we didn't unanimously support having the study happen at the expense of not studying other issues that could be of equal or greater import to the immediacy of the study.

My experience in Parliament has been that when you have a longitudinal study like this, typically it can be interrupted by things like the minister appearing to testify on supplementary estimates. The minister did not do so this time, so we're actually going to be voting on supplementary estimates without the minister appearing before committee to be questioned on them. That's not transparent.

The government does have a majority on this committee, and they can do with it what they will. I would like to say that the government campaigned on greater transparency and greater effectiveness. My argument has always been, why can't we intersperse even short studies on these issues with what's going on here?

I think what my colleague, Mr. Tilson, has proposed is a very elegant solution. It recognizes that this study is important, but it also recognizes the fact that we have two outstanding reports in front of this committee.

I think we have near unanimous support across party lines to do something on one, and that's the immigration consultants study. We all heard very harrowing testimony on the need to change the status quo, yet we haven't been able to table that report.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

I think the length of the study was discussed in camera and in subcommittee. I believe that disclosing that conversation is—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I didn't disclose anything that happened in camera.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** —wrong, so we should be careful.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That is a point of order, and that is a serious issue. Let me just consult to clarify.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** May I comment?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** All I said was that the length of the study was not unanimously consented to in the motion that was brought before the House of Commons. I believe that the actual wording of that motion didn't have a length attached to it, nor did it have wording that said it could not be interrupted. Is that correct?

That's the point I'm trying to make in support of Mr. Tilson's motion.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I would ask that the blues be consulted as to exactly what she said, because the way she just characterized her earlier remarks was not consistent with what I heard.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will take a moment to consult with the clerk to verify what everyone heard.

Thank you. I will reserve judgment on this serious matter for now. We will consult the blues, both for the previous meeting as well as exactly what was said during this meeting. I will then get back to the committee with my judgment on this issue.

• (1700)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Just in terms of that, to re-emphasize the point I just made—because we're talking about a motion where we're talking about the scheduling of this study—my intent was to show that in the original motion that was before the House of Commons, no length was given to it. Without looking at the blues, I think that's what I said. If I misspoke, my intent was to say that we have the ability as a committee to say, “Look, let's take this.... Since we weren't prescribed by that motion”—

**The Chair:** Thank you for that explanation of that particular point. We will take that into account.

I would also like to caution members to be very careful when they reference decisions made by the committee in camera.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Understood.

I also haven't referred to the length of the study, in terms of precision. The point is that we can take this study to Atlantic Canada, do a little bit of overtime this summer, consider this matter in situ, and then also take the time we have remaining here to finish the two reports that are very important to this committee. I would like to see our committee, hopefully, table those reports as soon as possible. In particular, my colleague, Mr. Tilson, made a really good point: it's Pride Month. I'd love to see the LGBTQ refugee study tabled in the House of Commons.

I think this is a very elegant solution, and I'm saying this from a point of genuineness to my colleagues opposite. We get to have the Atlantic Canadian study. Yes, we're going to do a little bit of overtime this summer. I'm okay with that, and I think most people here probably are, but my hope is that we'll vote on the motions. We don't have to agree on what the outcome is going to be, but we can vote on the motions that are before committee. That allows the opposition to do their job, and then we can also try to finish those reports before the House rises.

I think this is a very elegant solution. There's no partisan malice here; it's just I'd like to have our cake and eat it, too.

**Mr. David Tilson:** It's common sense.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** To be perfectly clear, the only opportunity opposition members get to raise criticism on government decisions or process is through procedural mechanisms at committee and in the House of Commons. It's important for us to put things on the record.

I'm putting forward a motion here—or Mr. Tilson did—that I think will resolve all issues. I'm speaking in support of it and I hope that my colleagues here will too. Again, just to be clear, I think the structure gives the government a lot of latitude and freedom in terms of scheduling the meetings itself and having input on the length of time.

The motion itself also isn't prescriptive in terms of what the next two meetings are doing. It's just saying, let's close off our business before we rise for the summer. This makes a lot of sense, and it's coming from a spirit of co-operation, so I hope my government colleagues will.... Even if we need to break for two or three minutes so they can consult with staff, or whatever needs to be done, hopefully we can have a positive decision on this, and again in the spirit of doing something that resembles work.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Sarai.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Oh boy. Talk it over, Randeep. Talk it over with your—

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I don't know why there's this flashback.

**Mr. David Tilson:** You guys in the back row, talk it over with him.

**The Chair:** All those in favour?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I would like a recorded vote.

**The Chair:** We'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

**The Chair:** The debate is adjourned.

I will now suspend for two minutes to allow the next panel to assemble.

Thank you.

• (1700)

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

• (1710)

**The Chair:** We resume our meeting.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** I have a point of order, please, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In the last panel, there was one individual, Mr. Lacey, who was still on the screen here. At the end of that discussion, a motion to adjourn the debate was moved. After the vote had taken place, I believe the procedure ought to have been that we continue with the speakers list. I didn't get to have my seven minutes, and you adjourned the panel before I had a chance to ask my questions. The panel was dismissed, so I've lost my seven minutes. As members know, seven minutes in this committee is very precious. It's seven minutes that I won't be able to recapture to ask questions of the panel.

I ask for clarification with respect to that procedure, Mr. Chair, and how we might rectify that.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, as you know, especially in the cases of video conferences, we schedule those facilities for specific times. Sometimes there is a bit of leeway, but most of the time there isn't a lot of leeway. We were originally scheduled from 3:30 to 4:30. By that point, we had gone over and we had the next panel, who had been scheduled for 4:30 and had been waiting for a significant period of time. This is just to clarify your questions on that.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Chair, notwithstanding that, the witness with the first panel was still on the video conferencing, so he didn't get cut out because the time had run out. In that process, my point, Mr. Chair, is that I've been shortchanged seven minutes with respect to this.

This happened in another meeting, and I was advised that I lost my seven minutes because the panel had been dismissed. In this instance the panel had not been dismissed, and I still lost my seven minutes anyway.

I want to raise this because, Mr. Chair, you will understand my point of view about not being able to get the time in to ask my questions, which is my allotted time on the rotation.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, as indicated on page 1031 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chairs have the leeway, when unexpected circumstances arise, to make those sorts of decisions.

That's exactly what happened. Currently we have time scheduled with the panel that is before us. The previous panel's time had run out, and I'd like to proceed.

Mr. Tilson.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Chair, on that point, I had my hand up.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry.

**Mr. David Tilson:** I agree with Ms. Kwan. The witness had not been dismissed, and because the witness had not been dismissed I believe Ms. Kwan has been robbed of her seven minutes of questions. That issue needs to be dealt with.

I assume the witness is now gone, but somehow she has lost her seven minutes. As far as I'm concerned, the issue was still alive. You dismissed the one witness, but you didn't dismiss the second witness.

**The Chair:** In fact, my instructions were that the technician be informed and the witness be informed that once we ran out, he's free to listen to the debates but is dismissed.

**Mr. David Tilson:** With respect, sir, I don't think you dismissed him.

**The Chair:** However, if you'd like to appeal my decision, Mr. Tilson, you're free to do so.

• (1715)

**Mr. David Tilson:** I appeal your decision.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Mr. Chair, on the point of order, I just want to point out that MP Ludwig began at 4:23; Mr. Kevin Lacey would have begun at 4:17, and James McDonald would have begun at 4:10.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Ms. Kwan, we will proceed to vote.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The committee adjourned at 5:06, and there were four minutes left, Mr. Chair. I just want to put this on the record.

**The Chair:** We will proceed with the vote on whether the decision of the chair shall be sustained.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 3)

**The Chair:** The decision is sustained.

I'd like to proceed with the witnesses we have before us, by video conference, from the Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada, Mr. Craig Mackie, the executive director. Welcome.

**Mr. Craig Mackie (Executive Director, Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada):** Thank you.

**The Chair:** From the New Brunswick Multicultural Council, we have with us Alex LeBlanc, the executive director. Welcome.

From the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador we have Ms. Sarah Parisio, coordinator. *Bienvenue*.

Mr. Mackie, the floor is yours, for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the invitation to participate in this discussion about immigration in Atlantic Canada.

For us, immigration is about individuals and families. It's about people, often vulnerable people.

Let me describe a shared experience for many immigrants and refugees. They arrive excited and enthusiastic about a new life in Canada. Canada truly is a place of their hopes and dreams, but within a few short weeks, emotions change from excitement to frustration to unhappiness and even to anger as they realize the challenges and barriers that are ahead in their new lives in Canada.

Those challenges include learning a new language, dealing with completely different cultural norms, finding a job, not having their education and credentials recognized, and not being able to find the food they're used to. Also, parenting expectations are different. Adjusting to daily life in a place where you look and sound different to the majority of people is hard, and newcomers have to deal with prejudice, discrimination, and racism that are often covert.

This is where the people at the settlement agencies come in. Throughout Atlantic Canada there are hundreds of English teachers, settlement workers, employment counsellors, interpreters, multi-cultural educators, and community volunteers who support newcomers with their short-term settlement needs and their long-term integration and inclusion into life in Canada.

It is these people who are helping to make immigration successful here. They are dedicated professionals who have the best interests of newcomers at heart, and they work long hours, are often underpaid and underappreciated, and they deal with everything from employment assistance to PTSD.

These settlement workers are also amazingly flexible and creative when it comes to problem solving, because every group has different needs. Chinese families coming through the provincial nominee program are very different from Indian families coming through express entry, who are in turn very different from Syrian refugees who arrived in large numbers and came from very traumatic circumstances. Settlement staff in these agencies adjust and support and comfort as circumstances and needs arise.

So much of this is important work, and it's unseen by most Canadians, and yet this support is critical to successful immigration, settlement, and integration. There's no question that it is expensive, but it is an investment in the future of Canada.

Atlantic Canada needs successful immigration. Our population is aging—take a look at this face—our birth rate is static or declining, youth continue to leave for education and employment opportunities elsewhere in Canada, and we need diversity. The organization I work for, the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, or PEIANC, or just “Newcomers”, as we're called locally, has been serving refugees and immigrants since 1993.

In 2016 we had a record-setting year in terms of the numbers of new immigrants and refugees who registered with us. While this is good news, it does raise a concern about the funding model that we deal with. Settlement agencies funded by IRCC are on a three-year rolling average of landings. That's all well and good when those landings are consistent year over year. In smaller locations, where numbers may vary, we can go through a couple of years of low landings and then have a big year. Meanwhile we've had cuts to our funding and have laid off staff, and the three-year rolling average doesn't catch up.

We've just been through this. Our funding was cut in 2015 by 17%—a quarter of a million dollars for this organization—after two years of low arrivals. Then in 2016 we had huge numbers, but we don't have the staff to support them.

I think, then, that it would be good to look at a funding model that would be a combination of the three-year rolling average and of looking at a minimum standard, a level below which staffing and funding would not drop.

PEIANC delivers a variety of settlement and integration services and programs. You can read the details on our website, [peianc.com](http://peianc.com). We offer an online guide for newcomers in seven languages. We average more than 30,000 unique visits a month, with people staying more than three minutes per visit.

P.E.I. is a small place, and we have the good fortune to work with partners that include the French settlement agency CIF, La Coopérative d'intégration francophone, the language schools at Holland College with the study abroad program, the PEI Connectors program for newcomer business people, RDÉE, and hundreds of other agencies and organizations with whom we partner to make our island a more welcoming place for newcomers.

We're also part of a network of settlement agencies in Atlantic Canada called ARAISA, the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies. We have representation from all four provinces. We provide support for each other and we organize professional development opportunities for staff. In the past few years we've had professional development sessions for refugee workers, settlement staff, employment counsellors, and community connections people.

● (1720)

P.E.I. has experienced rapid growth in becoming a more multicultural place. In the past 10 years at this association alone we've registered more than 14,000 newcomers from over 130 different countries. Our culinary landscape is one of the most obvious changes. We have more international food choices than ever before. Newcomers are working in almost all sectors of the economy. Several years ago, Mandarin rose to become the second most spoken language on Prince Edward Island.

Thanks to funding from the province, we also have one settlement worker dedicated to supporting temporary residents: temporary foreign workers and international students. The main focus of this role is an educational one and to help these temporary residents find a pathway to permanent residency. Currently, that one settlement worker has a caseload of 1,400 people, with about 400 active at a time.

One area of concern we see is support for multicultural education. As we work to help established Islanders deal with the changes in population and as we help them welcome and work with newcomers, it's important that we have the resources to deliver cultural sensitivity training and diversity education. At one point we had two educators. With cuts we now have only one, and we no longer deliver multicultural education to public schools.

P.E.I. is changing because of immigration, and it's mostly a good change, but as with all changes, there are challenges. We are part of a historic shift in the life of this island. We're proud to be helping new and established Islanders by bringing people and communities together to support settlement and inclusion.

Thank you so much.

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

Mr. LeBlanc, the floor is yours for seven minutes.

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc (Executive Director, New Brunswick Multicultural Council):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the committee members.

As a relatively young New Brunswicker, this is an issue that is very important to me. I believe deeply in our region's capacity to turn our demographics around. We have proven our ability to innovate and think outside the box in the design of the Atlantic immigration pilot, and now we must build on that momentum and develop other innovative options. Just as wise financial investors will diversify their investments, we need to diversify our interventions for the Atlantic region, as we don't yet know what will be the game-changer, and we certainly need a game-changer.

We know, of course, that employment is critical to retention, but if employment alone led to retention, we would not be here. There are other powerful dynamics at play, such as welcoming communities, education, the presence of ethnocultural and faith communities, access to culturally appropriate services, and the pull towards family and social networks in other regions.

It's clear that the status quo in our approach to date has not produced the result we want. Retention rates continue to fall in the 60% to 70% range across Atlantic Canada. Although there are a multitude of factors that lead immigrants to leave our region, I believe the real keys to retention lie within our cities. This is a central point that I want to make today. In a moment I'll share the reason I believe this is the case and indicate how we might test whether cities can get us a better result.

For many good reasons, immigration is controlled federally; however, integration takes place locally. This strikes me as a design challenge that we need to acknowledge and address. Of course, the federal government must ensure that the system has checks and balances, but this can be done while also providing more flexible options to provinces and cities to select the immigrants who match their economic, demographic, and linguistic realities. A one-size-fits-all approach has not worked and will not work. If we want a better result, we need a new paradigm.

We've had promising results over the last decade with the provincial nominee program and more recently with the Atlantic pilot. Both streams facilitate a more targeted approach to economic immigration. On May 29, you heard from Laurie Hunter, director of economic immigration policy, who stated:

Under the...PNP, participating provinces and territories develop economic immigration streams tailored to their labour market needs and nominate candidates [based on] their ability to contribute to their regional economies. It has contributed to higher numbers of immigrants arriving in Atlantic Canada in recent years. For example, in 2005, only 1.5% of new immigrants to Canada were destined for any of the Atlantic provinces. By 2014, that percentage had more than doubled to 3.1%.

Although this is a trend in the right direction, immigration traffic to the Atlantic still falls well short of the proportion of Canadians living in the region. We represent 6.6% of the population and received merely 3.1% of new immigrants to Canada. The PNP is proof that a nominations approach increases traffic to our region, but we still have work to do on integration and retention.

I can't help but wonder what if we gave our cities the opportunity to nominate newcomers through piloting a municipal nominee program. Could a hands-on approach by cities at a local level improve overall immigration and integration experience? Would cities get a better result? I believe they might, and I certainly believe that a nomination process driven by cities is worth testing.

Once again, we need to diversify our interventions. The Atlantic pilot is a great step, but it will not in and of itself change the demographic trends. We need bold interventions. The population crisis in our region is not simply a demographic challenge; it is indeed an economic one.

Ray Ivany put it well in his committee remarks when he said, "Demography, in this case, is not simply a tracking of age. It is a fundamental change to our province's...ability to be successful on a long-term basis."

With an aging and shrinking workforce, we hear time and time again from businesses in New Brunswick that access to workers is the number one challenge. The Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick, representing nearly 1,000 francophone enterprises, and the New Brunswick Business Council, representing 25 large businesses from various sectors, continually underline that access to labour is one of their largest challenges.

Exacerbating our workforce woes, New Brunswick's labour force is set to see 110,000 permanent exits over the next 10 years. To put this into perspective, this represents one-third of our entire labour force permanently exiting.

Proof that businesses are struggling has been demonstrated by the rapid uptake of the Atlantic pilot in our province. To date, 235 employers have completed an expression of interest in the pilot to fill a total of 1,700 jobs.

● (1725)

New Brunswick has an allowance of 640 for 2017, and 120 New Brunswick employers have already made 232 job offers to foreign nationals in three short months. Employers are stepping up, along with the provincial government, settlement agencies, and, yes, our cities.

New Brunswickers resettled over 1,600 Syrian refugees, the highest per capita across the country, and our cities played key roles in coordination, public messaging, and service delivery. Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John fall within the top four cities across the country for highest per capita numbers. To date, our retention rate from the Syrian community is over 90%.

Broader community involvement in this case has led to better integration, a greater sense of belonging, and I expect improved retention. Over the past four years, Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John have all created staff positions dedicated to immigration and population growth. They all have strategic plans to grow their communities through immigration. They all lead IRCC-funded local immigration partnerships. The capacity of our cities to organize and execute on immigration has never been greater. At the end of the day, immigrants are choosing employers, neighbourhoods, communities, and schools. They're choosing municipalities.

We have to be bold and creative and committed in solving this economic and demographic conundrum. It is clear we need to try something different. What better time than now, and what better place than the Atlantic region to pilot a municipal nominee program?

Thank you very much.

• (1730)

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

Madam Parisio, you have seven minutes, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sarah Parisio (Coordinator, Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador):** Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Sarah Parisio. I am the coordinator of the Réseau immigration francophone de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, under the umbrella of the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador, or FFTNL. First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to appear in order to share the views of our francophone community on immigration and on the Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

As you may know, the FFTNL is working to help advance, develop and showcase the francophone and Acadian communities of Newfoundland and Labrador. Francophone immigration is a key issue for the FFTNL, which has been working on it since 2007, together with your government.

Francophone immigration is actually one of our community's priorities, as noted in the Comprehensive Development Plan—Francophone Community of Newfoundland and Labrador 2014-2019.

Our small community has been around for more than 500 years and it is mainly distributed in three very remote regions. The distance between them ranges from 800 to 2,100 kilometres. I don't think I need to stress that the geographical remoteness is a major handicap for us.

According to the 2011 census, the francophone community represents 0.6% of the province's population, and 25,000 people are bilingual. Given the small size of our community, its survival depends on ensuring that immigration programs and trends are not additional factors that reduce its demographic weight, but rather that support its development.

The multi-year funding of francophone immigration networks in the provinces and territories by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) was an important step in the development of our communities through immigration. That is how we were able to build long-term partnerships with stakeholders, whether employers,

chambers of commerce or anglophone organizations working in the field.

Recently, we also celebrated some of your government's initiatives to facilitate the recruitment of temporary skilled workers by restoring the Mobilité francophone program. To facilitate the recruitment of francophone permanent residents, there have been changes to the express entry program, to the benefit of candidates with a good knowledge of French. Finally, with the inception of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, Newfoundland and Labrador could welcome up to 440 immigrants starting in 2017.

Last spring, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched the provincial immigration action plan. We were delighted to see that this government had made a clear commitment to increase francophone immigration and retention in the province by, among other things, a target for the provincial nominee program that is in line with your government's program, that is to say 5%.

Until 2015, francophone nominations through the provincial nominee program remained below 2.7%, or 15 people a year, since the nominee program accounted for almost 50% of the province's overall immigration.

Despite those advances and initiatives, we still have to face many challenges, which we must tackle on a daily basis. The major challenges are: direct and indirect French-language services for newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, and international recruitment. In terms of French-language services in Newfoundland and Labrador, this is the first year that the annual funding for the provincial francophone immigration network has been significantly reduced.

Since April 2017, the francophone immigration networks in the four Atlantic provinces have been receiving the same funding, which is an inexplicable and harmful change. Earlier, I referred to the remoteness of our communities. As we well know, cuts always have disproportionate impacts on areas remote from major centres.

Mr. Chair, you must understand that distances in Newfoundland and Labrador are nothing like in Prince Edward Island or the other Atlantic provinces. In addition, since April, we have only had one direct French-language service provider for newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

• (1735)

A mentoring service for francophone permanent residents is now available in St. John's to job seekers. Again, the remote areas are without service. The extended absence of direct services in French has placed our community at a disadvantage compared to other Canadian provinces, including the Atlantic provinces, which easily welcome francophones to their official language minority communities.

Among the many concrete examples of this inequality, we find that the provision of direct information about community services and referral services is funded by your government in all the other Atlantic provinces, but not in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In addition, language assessment and French-language courses for newcomers are non-existent in our province. As a result, we see that francophone newcomers go to the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, to a foreign country, to take the French test required to obtain Canadian citizenship. In addition to the lack of direct services in the province, we no longer receive funding to promote our province, the Atlantic region and the francophone and Acadian communities abroad. It was scrapped in 2012.

If I may, I will give the example of St. Pierre and Miquelon, which is unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. Our province is 25 kilometres away from France, meaning the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Unfortunately, our current agreement does not allow us to promote our province there because it is not a Canadian territory. We are losing a great recruitment opportunity because the residents of St. Pierre and Miquelon often have many ties of friendship and family with our province. This is a significant retention factor, not to mention that they are used to the climate and are already great hockey fans.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds left, Ms. Parisio.

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** However, we cannot go there because it's too expensive. Despite the lack of services...

I did not understand what you said.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds left.

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** Thank you.

We need better services to get better results. Francophone communities in Newfoundland and Labrador are ready to serve immigrants, but they do not have the tools they need to support, as they should, a program like the pilot. This represents tremendous potential for us. However, the services are not adequate to serve the hundreds of potential clients that we could receive.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** There will be rounds of five minutes.

Mr. Casey.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to all the witnesses for being here and for your patience, especially Mr. LeBlanc and Madame Parisio, who travelled to Ottawa to testify.

Mr. Mackie, whom I know well, is with us electronically. I'm going to present most of my questions to you, Mr. Mackie.

[Translation]

Ms. Parisio, I was born in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I represent the riding of Charlottetown.

[English]

Mr. LeBlanc, I'm a graduate of Fredericton High School, class of 1980.

Mr. Mackie, I'd like to ask you about Prince Edward Island's status as the only province in Canada where there is no face-to-face service for immigrants with the Government of Canada, since that service was eliminated under the previous government. Can you talk a bit

about the impact on your clients of that service being eliminated back in 2012?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Thank you.

When I started here seven and a half years ago, we had four or five CIC employees. That was dropped down to one, but at least we had a presence here. Although it wasn't a public presence, it could help to deal with clients.

We now have clients who have to travel out of this province to go to Halifax or New Brunswick to deal with IRCC. We have clients on financial assistance who don't have a lot of money. They have to collect their permanent resident cards and have to travel to Halifax.

Any errors or issues with permanent resident cards or temporary visas could be dealt with easily if we had a person based in Prince Edward Island. It would even help if we had somebody who would come and spend one week a month on Prince Edward Island so that, for example, sponsored spouses could have their interview on P.E.I. instead of having to travel to Halifax. We don't get many refugee claimants on Prince Edward Island, but when we do, there's nobody we can bring them in front of. They have to travel out of province to claim refugee status.

Those are a few examples.

• (1740)

**Mr. Sean Casey:** You started in the job with the Prince Edward Island Association of Newcomers to Canada when there still was a presence or an immigration office. What was the service like before it was eliminated?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** It was actually good to have people to whose office you could go to deal with things around contribution agreements. We have three contribution agreements with IRCC: one for settlement, one for refugee resettlement, and one for a LIP, a local immigration partnership. We have people who have never seen us, who don't deal with us on a regular basis, who don't understand the island context. It's a challenge for us to work through those situations, whereas before, as I've said, we could go and deal with things.

The other thing the IRCC officer is able to do is bring together the contribution agreement holders—there are probably six or seven of us on the island—to discuss common issues, themes, and challenges that we may be facing, and together come with some solutions. That doesn't happen anymore.

**Mr. Sean Casey:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to cede the rest of my time to Ms. Lockhart.

**The Chair:** Take one minute, please.

**Mrs. Alaina Lockhart:** Thank you, Mr. Casey.

Thank you to all of you.

I'm going to be very succinct here.

We talked about immigration to urban areas, and I agree that there certainly is merit to it. When we think about Atlantic Canada and the amount of rural area we have, I think about succession planning in farming.



I'm wondering, Mr. Mackie, whether you have some experience from Prince Edward Island. Most of Prince Edward Island is rural. What has the experience been there with immigration?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Most of the people who come through the two main programs, the provincial nominee program and express entry, are settling primarily in the greater Charlottetown area, which includes the towns of Stratford and Cornwall. There is a small trickle of people, after they've been here for a few years, seeing the advantages of moving to rural P.E.I.

It is a real challenge for us, though, to encourage people to settle in rural P.E.I. There are a couple of major challenges that we hear. One is that the lack of high-quality and high-speed internet in rural P.E.I. is something—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Craig Mackie:**—whereby people wanting to do business are unable to get access to it.

The other one is public transit.

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

Mr. Tilson, you have five minutes.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is for all of the witnesses from Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Let's say that we somehow figure out a way of increasing the flow of immigrants to Atlantic Canada. Will there be jobs available, and will there be housing available?

Let's start with Ms. Parisio.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** I will answer in French, if you don't mind.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Yes.

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** According to the studies that have been done recently, that is the case.

By 2025, the decline in the working-age population in Newfoundland and Labrador will be 10% or 35,000 people. So there's absolutely a clear need.

As in New Brunswick, we have already reached the target for nominees for the pilot program. We have already reached the number of job offers and vacancies, and it has only been three months. In fact, I am absolutely convinced that there is a need.

As for housing, it is true that it is a challenge for us. We could, however, consider new models. For example, there are a lot of practically vacant houses, which are inhabited by only one or two aging people. We could also create housing for the elderly, which would free up housing for immigrants.

• (1745)

[English]

**Mr. David Tilson:** Who would do that?

[Translation]

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** I'm not sure. The provincial government and the municipalities could participate, I imagine.

[English]

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. LeBlanc.

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** As I mentioned during my remarks, 1,700 jobs have been identified by employers who have completed expressions of interest in the pilot to date.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Are those full-time jobs?

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** Those are full-time jobs. They qualify under the pilot.

That's within three months of that stream opening up. I think what we have here is a disconnect, in that certain sectors are having trouble finding workers in New Brunswick.

Our chief economist in New Brunswick, David Campbell, provided some data surrounding our specific industries. Fewer than 5% of workers in New Brunswick's business services sector are immigrants. In Vancouver it's 47%. In Toronto it's—

**Mr. David Tilson:** Let me stop you for a minute, sir. Those are great facts to give to us, but would new immigrants be able to fill those positions that are available?

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** As I explained, 1,700 jobs have been identified as unfilled—

**Mr. David Tilson:** I understand that, but would new immigrants, if we were to somehow figure out a process of getting new immigrants to come to...? I think you're speaking on behalf of New Brunswick. Would new immigrants be able to fill those jobs? I trust that some of them are technical jobs where you have to have education, technical capabilities. Would they be able to fill those jobs?

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** Yes.

**Mr. David Tilson:** How do you know that?

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** Employers will seek people who have the skills. They'll screen for employees, just as any employer would, and hire and recruit employees who meet the qualifications for that job. These employers are doing that process internationally.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Would we only accept immigrants with those qualities to come to New Brunswick?

**Mr. Alex LeBlanc:** That's the premise behind the Atlantic pilot: that they're coming to address an immediate labour market need.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Thank you, sir.

Mr. Mackie.

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Right now, about 60% to 70% of our clients in our employment assistance service are finding work. We have growing sectors in Prince Edward Island in bioscience and in aerospace, with high demands for highly educated and experienced employees.

Frankly, new immigrant businesses are starting up through the provincial nominee program, and they're hiring.

Yes, then, I think there's both a demand and, as we're seeing, we're able to supply them through our employment assistance process.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Mr. Chairman, how much time do I have?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Wow.

Mr. Chairman, through you to anyone.... We'll try with Mr. Mackie.

In Ontario, for example, there are issues of language, issues of education for new immigrants, in other words, issues of transition. How would Prince Edward Island handle those issues?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Well, we have—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, the time is up. Perhaps you could answer that in a written form so that we have the benefit of your answer for our study.

Ms. Kwan, take five minutes, please.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I begin with my round of questions, I want to register this on the record. I don't support our moving into five-minute rounds instead of seven-minute rounds. I was asked for an opinion and I offered an opinion. I wanted us to stay on seven-minute rounds for this panel, which we would be able to complete within our time slot.

The government members and the chair, actually, decided that this is what we will do. That being said, it is the chair's prerogative. I lost seven minutes already in the first round, and I lost two minutes in this round. I can't say I'm happy about that. People talk about disrespect and not wanting to get into the study. The opposition matters, too, in terms of what our voice is and what we want to bring forward and what is important.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will go on with my questions. I would like to ask Sarah a question.

Sarah, you mentioned the need for adequate programming and services. To that end, what would adequate programming and services look like to you? What is it that you think is required to make those programs successful and, to that end, to make it successful for the provinces to which we wish to attract immigrants, and particularly to support bilingual immigrants?

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** I think we also need the equivalent of services already provided in English to be also available to those whose first official language is French. There are already many English-language services in Newfoundland and Labrador, including integration, reception and referral services, mentoring, job search assistance and language testing. English classes are offered, but French classes are not, to name one.

I'm thinking of the full range of integration services, including pre-arrival services. Those services are available in other provinces, and it is essential that we also have them in our province.

What we are focusing on at the moment is a service that would facilitate community integration because, as we mentioned before, immigrants are integrated into minority language communities. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the retention rate of francophone

immigrants is high because it is easy for them to integrate into small groups and small communities.

Where we live, everyone counts. Very few immigrants find themselves without help and without ties in the community.

However, if we cannot count on the funding of the services we need to help them, we lose most of them, of course. As a result, immigration has become detrimental to our francophone communities.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much for that answer.

We know that services are inadequate. Do you think the federal government should be providing and funding these programs?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sarah Parisio:** Absolutely, we have been claiming the right to these services for years. That is why I pointed out that this is the first year when there have been cuts to the one and only indirect service for newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador.

I stressed this because, despite all the progress we have made, it is very important to us.

I also emphasized the language test, the French test, which is required to obtain citizenship. Francophone immigrants go abroad to write it; they go to St. Pierre and Miquelon. Our own residents are forced to leave the country and then come back in order to obtain citizenship.

So the answer to your question is yes, absolutely.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

Part of the contribution of retention, really, and attraction, goes to the lack of services and the federal government has actually cut the funding in support services. We need to, clearly, not cut but also reinstitute and enhance the services.

Thank you for that.

I'd like to turn to Mr. Mackie.

**The Chair:** You have 20 seconds.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I heard you talk about refugee services and the lack thereof. Could you elaborate on that?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Actually, we do okay with refugee services right now, but with the numbers we received last year, we were nearly overwhelmed. We got some short-term funding to deal with it, but we really need some more work to help the Syrians through the rest of their initial journey in Canada.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** So you need additional services to support you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Morrissey, for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I didn't realize that was a question.

My question would be for Mr. Mackie.

Regarding the Prince Edward Island situation as it relates to rural Prince Edward Island, would you agree that the temporary foreign worker program supports a lot of seasonal jobs in the rural economy that are filled by Islanders, in Prince Edward Island's case?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** I don't know how many temporary foreign workers are currently in the province.

We do support those who approach us with service. As I said, we currently have about 1,400 on our caseload. Many of them do work in rural P.E.I. in fish plants and on farms.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** A lot of these foreign workers who are now in small rural communities are now purchasing homes in these areas where they would like to, as they move into a path of permanency, make these small communities their permanent homes.

Are you aware of that?

• (1755)

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** Yes.

In fact, we've been helping them. Some employers are interested in the Atlantic immigration pilot project. They're applying to get their workers, with whom they've been working for years in some cases, into this program so that they can get them permanent residency. They will make for great citizens in this country, I believe.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Would you agree that the Atlantic growth strategy can go a long way to growing the population in small rural communities across Atlantic Canada and Prince Edward Island, in particular?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** I do. I think it is a good pathway for us to pilot and to find out how we can quickly get some of these temporary foreign workers into more security by becoming permanent residents of Canada.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** How much time do I have?

**The Chair:** Three minutes.

**Mr. David Tilson:** Wow. I only had 30 seconds.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** You may have talked.

There was an earlier witness who gave evidence before this committee; you would not be privy to it. In my opinion they gave a very simplistic generalization of the landscape of Atlantic Canada as it relates to the reasoning for a temporary foreign worker program to exist. They failed to recognize that for a lot of these seasonal industries, without access to temporary foreign workers and without that labour supply to top up their local supply, a lot of jobs in Atlantic Canada would be in jeopardy.

From your landscape and viewpoint in Prince Edward Island, can you comment on this? In my opinion he made a very generalized statement that really proceeding down that avenue was not required. One way was simply to continue to raise the wage, recognizing that in the seafood processing industry it is a known fact worldwide that seafood processing will move to an area of lower wages. That's why the European Union brings people in from the eastern bloc countries and Scandinavian countries do as well. Also, we do it here in Canada. In fact, in the U.S., the State of Maine is now competing very aggressively with Atlantic Canada on the processing because they have access to a much broader temporary foreign worker program than we have in Canada.

Could you comment on that?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** We know from our experience that fish plant farms, the trucking sector, and so on have been unable to fill the vacancies they have from the existing population, and that's why they sought to keep their businesses going by accessing the temporary foreign worker program. I hear from these business owners that it's a valuable program for them.

As I say, I think the Atlantic immigration pilot is going to show how these people can become permanent residents, which is what most of them want to be. They've come here to Canada; they like Canada; they like Prince Edward Island, and they'd like to keep working where they are. They like the work and they're very happy where they are.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** Could you also comment on the fact that without the temporary foreign worker pool, many jobs filled by Atlantic Canadians and—

**The Chair:** Make a 10-second response.

**Mr. Robert Morrissey:** —specifically in Prince Edward Island would be in jeopardy without the complement of foreign workers to allow these companies to run efficiently?

**Mr. Craig Mackie:** I don't think there's a competition there. I think they go together.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their testimony, their insights, and their patience today.

With that, the meeting will suspend for a couple of minutes to move in camera to continue work on our draft report.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*





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