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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, February 15, 2018**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Robert Oliphant**



## Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Thursday, February 15, 2018

• (1200)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.)):** Good morning, and welcome to the 97th meeting in this Parliament of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

We welcome the minister with us. We're very pleased that you were able to come for an annual consideration of the immigration levels plan.

Before I turn it over to the minister to talk, I want to survey the committee members with respect to our meeting of Tuesday, February 27, which is normally scheduled for 11 o'clock. That is budget day, and the afternoon meetings of committees are being cancelled; however, the morning meetings are up to the committees. I want to survey whether you want to go ahead with the meeting or whether you have a desire to be in a lock-up situation. I just want to check on that.

We have work to do, so I would like to continue with the work, but I won't do so if there are members of the committee who want to avail themselves of the option.

Ms. Rempel.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** I propose that we table this discussion to the end of the second hour of this meeting.

**The Chair:** Okay. It will cut into our second hour, that's all.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We have the minister here.

**The Chair:** Okay. We'll do it later. There are two other items I want to bring up as well.

We will, then, continue with the minister.

Welcome. You have about 10 minutes.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship):** Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure to appear once again before this committee.

As you know, in the coming years, immigration will play an increasingly important role in the economic growth and prosperity of our country.

[English]

One of the greatest challenges Canada will soon face, along with many other industrialized countries, will be labour shortages linked to our aging population. While immigration is certainly not a solution on its own to our demographic challenges, it plays an important role in helping us to address those challenges. Now more than ever, it's important that we have a robust immigration system in place that can meet our current and future economic and demographic needs.

[Translation]

Canada has a tremendous opportunity to leverage our well-managed immigration system in support of our country's future.

[English]

That is why the government appreciates the committee's interest in this issue. As Canadians, we all have a vested interest in this very important topic.

To provide a bit more context, in 1971 there were 6.6 people of working age for each senior. By 2012, the worker-to-retiree ratio had dropped to 4.2 to 1. The projection is for a ratio of 2:1 by 2036, less than 20 years from now. Five million Canadians are set to retire by then, and in two decades almost 100% of Canada's net annual population growth will be through immigration. It already accounts for 65% of the growth today.

While Canadian workers are among the most educated and skilled in the world, in order to maintain our strong economic position globally it is crucial for Canada to attract more talented individuals with the skills our economy needs. Immigration, therefore, will ensure that we are able to continue increasing the size of our labour force and grow our economy.

Immigration will also help to support our much-cherished health care system, public pensions, and other social programs in the decades to come.

Our need for increased immigration is supported by the government's research as well as by independent research conducted by various organizations. The most recent census revealed that immigration is a driving force in meeting Canada's demographic and labour market challenges. In 2016 labour force growth was in large part due to increased immigration, with immigrants accounting for nearly one-quarter of Canada's labour force. Similarly, between 2006 and 2016 about two-thirds of Canada's population growth was the result of immigration.

Several observers have also called for significant increases in immigration to support Canada's long-term prosperity. For example, according to the Conference Board of Canada, in order to sustain a healthy level of economic growth across the country, we will need to bump our immigration levels up to 1% of our population within the next two decades.

The government agrees that investing in immigration will pay off for Canada. That is why I presented to Parliament an historic multi-year immigration levels plan.

• (1205)

[Translation]

First and foremost, the multi-year aspect of this plan is key.

[English]

Increasing our immigration levels responds to recommendations made by this committee and this approach is strongly supported by the provinces and by settlement service providers. That is because it allows governments and partner organizations to better plan for increases and to ensure there's the capacity to successfully bring in these newcomers and support their successful integration. As we increase our immigration levels over the next few years, we'll also continue to ensure that our immigration system remains well managed and operates with the safety and security of Canadians as its top priority. Under this plan, we will responsibly grow the number of permanent residents that Canada welcomes each year. Over the next three years, we'll increase our immigration levels from approximately 0.8% of the population to 0.9% of the population by 2020.

In terms of the actual admissions, this will see level increases of 310,000 in 2018, 330,000 in 2019, and 340,000 in 2020. These are the highest admissions in more than 100 years, and relative to the population, this is also the highest percentage of immigration in more than 40 years. To respond to our current and future economic needs, 60% of the growth that I spoke about over the next three years will come through our economic programs. Prominent among these programs is our provincial nominee program, which helps meet regional labour market needs and distributes the real benefits of immigration all across the country.

As well, the number of skilled immigrants we select through our express entry system will grow over this time frame, which will mean more highly skilled talent for our labour market. At the same time we recognize the importance of non-economic immigration as well. That is why we are also allocating more space each year for sponsored family members so that we can reunite more families with their loved ones in Canada.

We'll also continue to uphold our humanitarian traditions and maintain Canada's role as a global leader in offering protection to individuals in need. Refugee admissions will also increase in each of the next three years.

As you know, our settlement services, such as language training, employment services, and newcomer orientation, are linked to newcomers' success. As mentioned, the adoption of a multi-year plan approach helps us, but also our partners, better plan to meet the challenges and opportunities of immigration growth. Instead of planning admissions one year at a time, as has been the norm for the

last 15 years, planning admissions over three years will ensure that the government and our service provider partners are in a better position to plan for newcomer-specific settlement needs.

The increased immigration levels under this plan are projected to cost approximately \$440 million over the next three years, and this will be detailed further in budget 2018. With these additional resources, we will be able to address the increased demands placed on our global processing network and our settlement programs. This additional funding will enable my department and its partners to process and screen more applications for permanent residency in a timely manner, while we continue to provide high-quality settlement and integration services to newcomers.

We expect that higher immigration levels will help us improve the operations of our immigration system, reduce application backlogs, and improve processing times for our clients. This is because level increases in certain categories will create more admission spaces. This will also allow the department to process more applications each year and admit more people, thereby reducing backlogs and wait times. In particular, we expect to see real progress in reducing processing times in family, caregiver, and refugee programs.

Faster processing also ensures that employers can more quickly and effectively get the talent they need. With the multi-year levels plan, the government is positioning our immigration system to best serve our country's current and future economic needs. It represents a major investment in our country's prosperity and will also ensure that immigration continues to contribute to our diversity and our nation's strong cultural fabric.

For all the reasons I've described today, our historic multi-year immigration levels plan will ultimately benefit all Canadians, now and into the future.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

I look forward to answering your questions.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Minister. I want to take a moment to also welcome the deputy minister. Ms. Morgan, thank you for being here and for bringing assistant deputies and associate assistant deputies with you. Most of you are no strangers to our committee, so thank you for being here to support the committee in its questions.

We open our questioning with Mr. Sarai for seven minutes.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Thank you for coming, Minister, and always making time for us.

When we were elected, the wait times specifically for spousal applications and live-in caregivers were egregious at best. We have finally decreased them to decent time periods.

What impact will this plan have on wait times and backlogs in the various streams?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I agree with you that the wait times and the backlogs in both those programs were unacceptable. They kept families apart and ensured that loved ones were unnecessarily kept apart. We made it a priority to tackle the spousal sponsorship system initially by promising two things: that we would make a lot of progress on the backlog and that 80% of the applications would be able to be processed in 12 months or less.

I'm proud to update this committee, as I updated all Canadians yesterday, that we have done both. We have reduced the backlog in the spousal program from 75,000 cases to 15,000, and we have achieved the processing time target of 12 months or less for more than 80% of the cases.

When we looked at the applications from December 2016 and examined those applications on December 31, 2017, we saw that over 80% of them were processed in under 12 months.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you.

Minister, Canada is home to almost 300,000 international students. Thousands are in Surrey and specifically my riding of Surrey Centre; all of whom now have a pathway to citizenship. Most of these students will probably end up applying for permanent residency under express entry or other economic categories, following the completion of their studies and during their three-year post-graduate work permit phase.

Are you considering their numbers in future plans, as the number may be substantial? I assume 60,000 to 70,000 of them may apply for permanent residency. I don't want the situation of live-in caregivers to happen with students where a five-, six-, seven-year backlog is then imposed on getting permanent residency.

•(1215)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** We welcome international students. It's an area in which I feel, and my colleague ministers agree with me, we can do better as a country. We keep attracting more and more international students every year. I think we can be even more ambitious because I believe international students add a lot to our country economically but also add their perspectives to different institutions and to our research ecosystem.

We want as many as possible to stay. Part of our push for higher levels but also for multi-year planning is to do exactly that, to have more space for international students and other skilled individuals who would like to live in Canada permanently, and to be able to land them.

We are cognizant of the levels needed for that. We feel that the levels plan we've introduced will accommodate some of those increases over the next three years, including this year. I may also defer to my deputy to answer any specific questions on that.

**Ms. Marta Morgan (Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are a number of pathways for students to become permanent residents of Canada. Through the express entry program students who have studied in Canada receive extra points for Canadian education, for their education level, as well as other human capital they bring to Canada. Also there's the provincial nominee program, which is quite sensitive to local labour market needs. Once they finish their education, there are a number of different pathways for students both to have temporary work permits and also then to have permanent residence.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Thank you.

I'm very pleased, by the way, with this ambitious plan and the gradual increases in future years. It's best to see a forward-looking plan.

Surrey Centre absorbs a lot of new immigrants, and it's probably one of the fastest growing electoral districts in the country. A lot of them are not accustomed to English or French, and it's very important to ensure that immigrants have the support to help them learn those languages to find jobs and ultimately become successful Canadians.

Are there plans to increase these newcomer supports in proportion to the increase in the number of people we're welcoming? What kind of impact will this plan have on wait times and backlogs in various second language training programs?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** You've asked me two questions there. I'll start with the first one. Absolutely, any increase we make in the immigration levels plan is accompanied by adequate funding to do that, because otherwise it would be irresponsible for the government to increase levels without having the funding to absorb these newcomers. There is money budgeted for these increases, and you will see the details in budget 2018 when it comes out.

Second, in terms of language training specifically, that's part of our settlement funding anyway. It's about 36% I believe, so you can rest assured that any increases in the levels this year or in the next two years will have a corresponding increase in the amount of money we dedicate towards settlement services, so these newcomers can be settled and absorbed into Canada.

I must say, though, look at our track record as well. Since we have come into government, settlement spending has increased every single year to deal with the higher levels. We are now spending record amounts of money on settlement services. When you include money we provide to Quebec under the separate Canada-Quebec Accord, it's over \$1 billion. That is a significant settlement, because we believe that equipping newcomers to succeed faster and to integrate is of benefit to all of us.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** I am probably pressed for time. What will the plan do to improve family reunification, specifically outside of the spouses, parents, and grandparents? Is that being considered?

Along with that, just quickly, last year there were 10,000 applications. Were all 10,000 applications processed?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I'm going to have to hold that question. Keep it in your mind, and someone else might want to raise it and give you a chance to speak to it.

Ms. Rempel.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, you've introduced the concept of budgeting, both in your remarks as well as in your response to my colleague, where you just made the statement that you have adequate funding to absorb these newcomers.

Last week, Quebec Minister of Immigration David Heurtel said he is going to send the social assistance bill for refugee claimants to Ottawa. Quebec paid more than \$50 million to asylum seekers in 2017, which is double what they spent in 2016. Is that figure included in your budget estimates for 2018?

•(1220)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** First of all, I haven't received—

**The Chair:** I'm just going to interrupt you for one moment, Minister. The question will be allowed. The tie-in was to the levels, but just be very careful that we keep them tied in to the levels. We will have an opportunity to discuss the supplementary (C)s and interim estimates before they are deemed heard from our committee on March 21, so we'll have the minister again for an opportunity on the budget, but you did tie it in.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Just as a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, the minister introduced in his remarks the projected cost of the levels. Therefore I would argue that your ruling is perhaps slightly—

**The Chair:** I've said it's okay. I'm just offering guidance to make sure we stick as close to the levels. This one is tangentially related to levels. The budget the minister referred to was actually the budget related to the newcomers that are part of his budget. It's tangential. I'll allow it, but I just caution—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I have just a point of clarification. When my colleague asked about settlement services funding, a similar point wasn't made, so I would hope similar latitude would be made on my question line.

**The Chair:** I think that was directly related to his remarks. It's indirect.

Go ahead. I just wanted to caution that we don't go too far down the budget line.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** If I may re-emphasize my comment, the Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness from Quebec paid almost double to asylum seekers. Many of them were people who entered the country illegally.

Is the \$50 million he is asking for included in your \$440 million figure?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I haven't received that letter officially. If and when I receive that letter, I will respond to it accordingly, but just to provide the best answer I can right now, we have responded to Quebec's need to deal with the potential pressures on its social programs by responding positively to their request for us to expedite work permits for asylum seekers—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you. That's irrelevant to my question.

I'll proceed onwards. Last time you appeared before committee, I asked if you had asked the Americans to renegotiate the loophole in the Canada–U.S. safe third country agreement that allows people to illegally enter the country and claim asylum. Since your last

appearance, have you broached that topic with the American government?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I contest the notion that the Canada–U.S. safe third country agreement somehow allows people to enter Canada illegally. I don't accept the premise—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** It actually does allow people to illegally enter the country and claim asylum, so I will ask my question again. Since the last time you came, and since we've seen thousands more people utilize this loophole, have you broached with the American government the renegotiation of the safe third country agreement specifically with regard to this loophole that allows the situation to—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** There are no formal negotiations on the safe third country agreement.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Have you achieved any sort of formal process with the American government in terms of alerting your administration to when the American government intends to lift TPS, temporary protected statuses, for various protected groups?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** We have an ongoing relationship with our counterparts in the Department of Homeland Security. My officials meet regularly with their officials, and we have channels of communication. We do talk about TPS policies—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Are there any—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I'm trying to answer the question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Are there any other groups that you anticipate seeing TP statuses lifted from?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Sorry?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Within the United States.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I'm not privy to what the United States government will do with respect to TPS.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you. That builds to my next question.

In your levels plan, there really isn't a year-over-year increase, even from last year's levels plan, that's material in terms of asylum claims. Given that you don't have any plans to renegotiate the safe third country agreement with the United States government or a formal mechanism by which your government would know if a TP status is going to be revoked, why is it that you have only planned for a static level of asylum seekers in the levels plan?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** In our levels, we do make space for protected persons, who are asylum seekers who have made their case and have been granted conventional refugee status. They have the option of applying for permanent residency status in our country, and in that process—

•(1225)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Yes, I realize that, but the levels that you have in here are static.

Since you have put nothing in place to prevent the increase through this particular channel, which has been very pervasive in our country, why have you only planned for a static amount for a several-year plan for that particular group of people?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It's not a static amount. It increases year after year. They're not significant increases, but there are increases, so—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I would argue—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I wouldn't say that they're static. What I would say is that we make allocations for protected persons in our levels plan. Part of the reason why that is the number—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Just to re-emphasize—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I'm trying to answer the question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** If it's a static level or a very moderate increase, we haven't seen a moderate increase in people making asylum claims. Are you assuming that these asylum claims will not be found valid by the IRB, or have you failed to put in place any sort of prevention measure to see the increase over time? Your numbers don't jibe with your plan right now.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I wouldn't say that we haven't taken measures to prevent increases. With the whole outreach process we've been engaging in with diaspora communities in the United States by a number of members of Parliament, our consulates, myself, and social media, we've been doing a lot to make sure that we correct misinformation about our asylum system and our immigration system in the United States.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** On to another area of our humanitarian levels, do you have any plan to lift the cap for private sponsorship of refugees from groups seeking to sponsor refugees from northern Iraq?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** There is no cap on people attempting to sponsor vulnerable people from northern Iraq. There is no cap.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I would argue that point, given the difficulty that many families and many groups of five have had in sponsoring groups such as the Yazidis and other persecuted minorities.

Do you have plans, and are they included in these levels, to see an additional amount of persecuted minorities from northern Iraq?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** First of all, I would begin by saying that our plan to provide safety, security, and a new home to survivors of Daesh is very commendable, because I think we're only the second country that has a specific plan for survivors of Daesh, mainly Yazidis.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Just yes or no.... Do you have a plan to increase it?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It's not a yes or no question.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** It is a yes or no question.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I would disagree.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Do you plan on increasing the number of PSR spots for people from northern Iraq, specifically the Yazidi community?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** There's no cap on individuals seeking to sponsor vulnerable people from northern Iraq. The problem is that the premise of the question is wrong. You're asking me to answer yes—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** No, the premise of your answer is wrong. If your answer was correct, we wouldn't have the issue that we have where people can't sponsor these people.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I wish you had brought—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** It's ridiculous.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:**—that same advocacy to your party, which only brought three Yazidis to Canada.

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

We're going to switch to Ms. Kwan.

I remind all members that it's very difficult for the interpreters to interpret when two people are speaking at the same time. I ask all members to try to respect that, so that our interpreters can do their jobs effectively. Thank you.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes.

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

Thank you to the minister and his staff for coming to the committee.

I'm going to focus my question on the key issue, a policy issue that will impact the immigration levels numbers, and that is with respect to the government policy on paragraph 38(1)(c) of the IRPA. The minister will recall that he appeared before this committee and even in his own words admitted that the policy is inconsistent with Canada's values with respect to people with disabilities. The government, the minister, has been studying this issue since 2016, and to date there has been no action taken with respect to a change in policy. What is the holdup? Why is there still not a change to this critical policy that impacts people's lives in a very tangible way, often by keeping family members apart from their loved ones?

I have a number of cases before me in which people have come under the live-in caregiver program, and they have done their two years of work requirement. They made an application. The processing delay is such that they've waited five years in addition to that to get their case application processed only to find out that they're being rejected for permanent resident status because one family member has a disability.

What is the holdup and why can't changes take place?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I want to reassure the honourable member, Mr. Chair, that I have been very clear that this policy is out of step with Canadian values on accommodating people with disabilities.

Second, I would contest the question by saying that there has been action. We have been talking to provinces. Part of the reason we were waiting was to get the recommendations that came out of this committee, which did a lot of work on this topic, and we will be responding. Our official response to the committee's recommendations will be tabled by April 12. I would encourage you to wait for that response and in that response you'll find out how we're proceeding on this issue.

● (1230)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'll say this. This committee, by the way, before breaking for the holiday season, jammed through a process. In fact, on December 13, on the public record, we had a meeting that ended at 12:30. According to the public minutes, it was agreed that any dissenting reports would be submitted within 30 minutes of that meeting. We were jammed to get this work done, which we did, and I'm happy that we got that work done.

I know the minister says there are 120 days to do a formal response. The minister has been studying this issue since 2016. People's lives are on hold because of it. I have a case, Marilyn Cruzet, who was brought to my attention. She has a daughter who was born with a developmental disability, and despite her being physically healthy, requiring no medical treatments, and having the capacity of self-care, IRCC has determined that the daughter could pose an excessive demand on Canada's health or social services. This means that Marilyn's entire family is ineligible to come to Canada. She's been here for a decade. She made her application after she fulfilled her two-year work requirement and waited five years in addition to that to have her application processed, only to find out that she is not eligible because of her daughter's condition, even though her daughter's condition requires no medical expenses or treatment whatsoever. She's now trying to appeal this process and go through that.

That's just one case. I've had many other cases like this, so when the minister—

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate my friend's point on this, but I am a little hesitant because we're bringing in a very specific case involving a young person whose privacy I think we're breaching. Even if we have the consent of the parent, I do think it's very problematic that we're bringing in a very specific individual case that could potentially jeopardize a minor's long-term prospects. I do caution that it could—

**The Chair:** I'm not sure that is a point of order; however, it does give me an opportunity to remind the member to try to keep her questions as closely related to the levels issue as possible. An individual case isn't really related to the levels, but....

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Except that—

**The Chair:** I'm not sure it's a point of order, but I do just want to remind you. Thank you.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair...except that it does. There are about 1,000 cases across the system that are in this situation, and they impact the levels numbers absolutely.

Absolutely I have consent to talk about this case, so for the minister to think he has 120 days to move forward to do an official response, when he's been studying this issue since 2016.... He may have the luxury to wait, but the family members don't. They are being separated and they need a policy change.

What is the holdup? The minister says, "I've been talking to the provinces." Well, you've been doing that for some time now. Why can't we have a policy change that will affect the lives of these individuals now?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Thank you.

Just to set the record straight, this policy has been in place for 40 years.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Then we should wait more, and it's okay...?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No, let me finish. I'm trying to answer your question.

It's been in place for 40 years. I am the minister who has publicly said that we will change this policy because it's out of step with

Canadian values with respect to inclusion for people with disabilities. The way we do that is also equally important, because this affects provincial health care and social service budgets. We have to do it in line with what the provinces are willing to do. This is a process that involves them.

It also involves this committee. We got a report from the committee that we are responding to, and our response will be tabled by April 12. You will see our response very shortly.

• (1235)

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

Every single member of this committee called on the government to repeal this section. Canada is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For the last 40 years we've actually been in violation of this convention, so what's another 120 days, I suppose, for us to review this? Then after that—I don't know—what's another  $x$  number of days for us to proceed? The government doesn't seem to think there's an urgency to this.

Mr. Tomlinson came here today, with the HIV/AIDS network. He cited an example whereby people with HIV and AIDS, who will qualify, who can contribute to Canadian society, are being rejected based on this provision, notwithstanding their contributions. This thus affects many, many people.

I feel the urgency for us to act, but the government is still waiting and somehow we seem to think it's okay.

Committee members at this table also said:

I must say that at this point in time I do not see how raising the threshold and excluding fewer people changes the fact that excluding anyone is prima facie discriminatory and violates Canadian values.

A committee member actually said this. Others equated this policy to slavery, in terms of how we approach our immigration policy.

Does the minister not feel the urgency to act, or does he think that it's okay and that we can continue to wait?

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to end it there. We need to go to Mr. Whelan. Thank you.

**Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, and your officials for coming today. This is great. I'd also like to thank you for your support and the support you've shown to the committee in our study on paragraph 38(1)(c) of the act on medical inadmissibility. I look forward to your response on April 12. If there's anything I can do, I would love to help see some changes to this. I know you're very committed to it.

The case numbers look small. Let me tie this back to the levels plan. If a change, to repeal or change paragraph 38(1)(c), is implemented, does it have any meaningful impact on levels?



**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** According to the existing numbers and existing patterns, the answer would be no. I don't want to preclude our official response, but for argument's sake, if the whole provision didn't exist, there might be the same percentage or it might increase. It's hard to tell at the moment, but the numbers are small.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** It seems to me, with 900 per year, that they are roughly within the margin of error of the plan that's presented.

I think this is historic. I'm glad that you're here to present this plan. The three-year plan looks as though it's going to benefit families, all sectors of the economy, and all areas of the country. If you could speak a little bit to how this plan will concretely benefit families, we'd love to hear it.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It will benefit families because we are seeing an increase there to make sure that we continue the progress we've made to bring down substantially the backlog in the spousal program, but also to deal with the backlog in the parent and grandparent program.

The fact that we doubled the allocations from 5,000 to 10,000 in the parent and grandparent program is important. We will have an increase in both the spousal and the parent and grandparent program. We have to continue to make sure that family reunification remains a priority for us, and these multi-year levels will enable us to do that.

It will also enable us to have the flexibility to be nimble enough between years. The problem with the one-year plans was that they were fixed within that year. If you didn't meet your target or if you exceeded it, you couldn't really adjust or respond or be flexible enough. In this case you can, because it's three years.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Where we have the highs and the lows and the targets demonstrated, if, in a particular year, say, in year one or year two, we are closer to the high, will we receive a new report from your department that says now we're going to rejig because our end goal is 1% immigration, and this three-year plan only gets us to 0.9%? If we're able to shoot past in year one or year two, will we see an adjustment in future years?

Will you be essentially presenting to us a new three-year plan every year?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It's hard to speculate on that but I can of course assure you that the number of people we are able to land in different categories will inform us for the next levels planning process.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** In terms of economic growth and the growth in the PNP program, can you speak a little to how the provinces are receiving this, and whether or not they share your view that this will help grow their economies?

• (1240)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Yes, in fact one of the main reasons we had this ambitious growth in the numbers is the provinces. The provincial economies are doing very well, and they had asked us to help them meet the soaring demand for workers and for skilled labourers in certain aspects of their economy. They feel that the provincial nominee program has been working really well for them, and they've constantly been asking for increases. This year, you see an increase every single year as part of the three-year plan.

By the time we get to 2020, we will have answered their call by increasing the admissions to their programs by 33%. In fact, if no program grows more or as fast as the.... This program is growing faster than all of the other programs that we have. It speaks to the needs of the provinces for more and more workers. The benefit of the provincial nominee program is that it spreads the real benefits of economic immigration all across the country and not just in the main cities.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** That's great to hear.

In terms of the additional resources that will be required within the department, what type of information can we expect to see from your department or your ministry next year and the following year regarding resource allocation and whether or not there are efficiencies of scale, whether or not we're able to hit these targets, and the additional resources that are required to hit them?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** All of that information is public. We publicly post all that information. We provide it. We'll also continue to provide that information to this committee.

The specific amount of money we will get moving forward as a department will come out in the budget. Having said that, these increases have been budgeted for. They'll be funded accordingly. Secondly, in terms of settlement, in terms of employment orientation, general orientation, all that is supported.

In terms of the targets, the numbers that we've told the committee are the numbers, but in terms of whether we are able to achieve a certain target within a year, we'll also be able to provide that information to the committee.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** In terms of the situation at the irregular border crossings and the number of additional people who are coming into Canada in an irregular fashion and claiming asylum, I think Ms. Rempel has raised the spectre of whether or not the levels are high enough to accommodate that influx, and whether every year or two there will be a different group who will be attempting to come to Canada from the United States.

I wonder how much flexibility there is in growing these targets for the "humanitarian and other" ground and for the "refugees and protected persons" ground, perhaps over time, to accommodate this influx. In the same way as with spousal reunification, you increased the numbers at the same application rate to enable the backlog to be cleared. Is there a potential to do the same thing as this levels plan progresses?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Very quickly, we've always had space in our immigration plan for refugees but also for protected persons. The two are actually separate. It's important to know that before asylum claimants can actually apply for permanent residency, they have to have their claims heard and accepted by the Immigration and Refugee Board. If they're not accepted, they don't get to apply, which means they leave our country and they're not part of the equation.

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

Ms. Rempel, you have five minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

Minister, in your remarks, you talked about immigration in terms of meeting Canada's labour shortages, yet your government reduced the number of additional points awarded for job offers through economic streams from 600 to 50.

How many people coming through our economic immigration streams over the next three years do you expect to enter Canada with a job lined up?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** The job offer still gets you points. The reason we reduced those points was that we felt that people, like international students, for example, were not getting the points they deserved based on their potential and their experience.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** That's not the question that I asked.

The question that I asked was, how many people do you expect to enter the country through an economic stream, in the period that the levels plan cover, that have a job lined up?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It's a point system, so you get points for various things, not just the job offer. The reason we lowered those points was that having a job offer disproportionately advantaged some people, because everything was based on the job offer, virtually everything, instead of the language, the degrees, the educational background, and so on. That's why we did that.

• (1245)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** But one could argue that an economic immigration stream is to bring in people to become employed—I'm just saying—so I'll ask my question again.

How many people entering Canada over the period of the levels plan do you expect will have a job upon entering Canada?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** For the provincial nominee program, for example, most of them have job offers.

Express entry is different. We felt that the points that were given to people who had a job offer were so disproportionate that they didn't account for all the other things we want from prospective immigrants. That's why we did that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Again, how many people do you expect to enter through the express entry program to have a job when they come to Canada?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** That's impossible to say because people are given points for the variety of things they bring to the table, not just a job offer.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Would you not argue that the express entry system is designed specifically to bring people to Canada to become employed?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** The express entry system is designed to attract the best and the brightest from the world to help us.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** To become employed...?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Among other things. It's also to transfer skills, to transfer productivity—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We have other—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** —to transfer best practices

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** That sounds like a lot of buzz words. We have a lot of—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No, it's not. It's real.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We have a lot of other categories for people to enter the country, including a humanitarian stream, so how many people—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No, I'm talking about skills.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Skills should be applied to jobs in an economic stream, so how many people, through the express entry stream, do you expect to find a job when they enter Canada, given that you have lowered the points from 600 to 50?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** The issue you're asking me about is impossible to answer, because people are not—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** It should be very possible to answer, I would argue.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No, it's not. I'm trying to answer the question. If you don't want me to answer the question, you can continue speaking, but I can answer the question if you want me to.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The question I asked, though, was, how many people do you expect to have a job when they enter Canada through the express entry program, now that you have reduced the points?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Many of them.

The problem is that the express entry system is based on a number of factors. It's not just the job offer. If that were the case, then we would call it the job offer program.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The express entry system, though, arguably and ostensibly, is under the economic stream to bring people to address, as you so illustriously quoted, "labour shortages linked to our aging population", so just to be clear—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** It's labour and skills shortages. I didn't just talk about labour.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** —you can't tell us how many people you expect to have a job when they enter Canada through the express entry program after you've reduced the points from 600 to 50.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Once again, the reason we have reduced the points for the job offer was that we felt the job offer was disproportionately being rewarded over the other valuable things we want from the prospective—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I would argue that a job offer is fairly important.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** If I can finish, I'll explain.

We want prospective applicants to not just have a job offer but to also have the desirable educational background—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** But not a job.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No, that's not the case. It's not exclusive. The two are not mutually exclusive, because that's how you are—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** But reducing it from 600 to 50 is fairly exclusive, one would argue.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** No. What it means is that we are taking into account the other things that people bring to the table, not just a job offer.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Like a job....

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Yes, like a job, but also like a—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** How do we address the labour shortage, as you've outlined, if we aren't bringing people in to get a job?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** I would argue that it's—

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I can't give you a chance to answer that question. I know you'd like to.

We're going to go to Mr. Tabbara now for five minutes.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The question remains.

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

Thank you, Minister, for coming here today.

I think what we're trying to achieve here is about our overall demographics. Since 1970 we have had fewer people working to support retirees. We had around six people working to support one retiree, and in 2030 that is projected to be two people working for one retiree.

I have some numbers here from Statistics Canada, now that we have reinstated the long-form census, thanks to our government.

In Canada, the average age of an individual is around 40. In Germany, the average median age is 46.1. We definitely see this number as very alarming, and this is why we need to ensure that we have more younger individuals who are coming to our country, ensuring their success in employment, so that we can make sure we have sustainable numbers so that we can sustain retirees. Other countries, such as Nigeria and Uganda, have a very low median age at around 15 years of age.

In my particular riding in Kitchener South—Hespeler, it's actually a little bit lower than the national average. It's kind of a younger population filled with commuters going to the GTA, at 37.1.

With the levels plan that was introduced recently, we're welcoming in 330,000 permanent residents in 2019, and 340,000 in 2020. Those numbers are up from previous years. For example in 2014, they were between 240,000 and 265,000.

Minister, with these numbers, the examples I gave of Germany's and our numbers, with a growing and aging population, can you elaborate more on why we need such great talent here at a younger age to sustain our retirees?

• (1250)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Thank you. It's a really important question.

I'll start by just giving you an example. In Newfoundland and Labrador, for every 100 Newfoundlanders who join the workforce, 125 retire. There's a gap of 25 people. One of the ways—not the only

way—to address that is through immigration. One of the ways we have responded to that need from Atlantic Canada is to introduce the Atlantic immigration pilot program. It's a three-year pilot program. They get an additional number of permanent immigrant slots above and beyond their provincial nominee numbers. It is to address the skills and labour market shortages, but also to help them with their demographics because each skilled worker they're able to attract under that program can also bring family members. The two sort of go together.

The provincial nominee program is another program that helps address that challenge of rejuvenating different regions in terms of their populations, but also in terms of their labour market needs. It's very flexible because it allows different regions and different provinces to nominate the kinds of differently skilled immigrants that they need for their own particular regional labour market. It's a very flexible program. The same goes for the Atlantic immigration program.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Can you also just briefly explain about the global skills strategy that was brought in, in the summer? This is going to help a lot of different areas within our country to bring in high-quality talent. Can you elaborate more on that and how it will benefit all of our constituents?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Employers have been saying that in certain categories they needed to get talent here really fast. Some of that talent is very mobile. It's not permanent immigration. They need people to come in and do short-term work, high-value work, and then go back. The process was taking too long, so under the global skills strategy it's been cut down from about seven months for processing to less than 10 days.

Second, under the global skills strategy—

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I'll stop you right there. If you're bringing them in, in less than 10 days, if there's a gap in our skills and our labour within the market, you're shortening that gap in less than 10 days.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I need to end that there. Thank you very much.

Is it Ms. Rempel or Mr. Maguire?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I'll start, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You might share, though.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We might share. We'll see how things go.

In relation to my previous line of questioning, going back to the statement about the planned immigration levels being able to meet Canada's labour shortages, how many total immigrants out of these does the minister expect to have a job after, let's say, a one-year period?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** If you look at the highly-skilled, economic class, principal applicants, for example, their annual earnings surpass the Canadian average very soon after landing—obviously, they would have to have a job to make those earnings—and they continue to increase over time.

The economic outcomes of immigrants in all categories improve the more time they spend in Canada. Especially in the federal skilled worker program, their earnings actually end up surpassing the Canadian average soon after they land.

I think it would be—

• (1255)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The question that I asked, again, was—

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** —safe to assume that they would do that because they have a job.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The question that I asked, though, was for the total numbers.

There has been a lot of messaging that this government has put out about its levels plan being able to, as the minister said in his remarks, address the “labour shortages linked to our aging population”. I am wondering how many of the total immigrants in this plan the minister expects to have a job after a one-year period.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** We can certainly get that information to you. I'll ask my department to provide that information to you.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

Since the Romanian visa requirement was lifted at the beginning of December, how many Romanian nationals have claimed asylum?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** It has gone up since December. I will search for the information. Let me see. It's 232.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Okay, and how many Romanians claimed asylum status in all of 2016?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** It was very low. They were under the eTA 2.0 system before that. It was quite low.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** How many Romanian nationals do you expect to claim asylum in Canada over the next calendar year?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** As you know, with asylum claimants, there's no cap, and it's difficult to know how many are going to come in. This number isn't—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** So one would argue that 300 in a month is a fairly significant increase over virtually none. Is that correct?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** You could argue that. It's challenging to know if that trend will continue or if it's a blip because the visa requirement was quickly lifted, and they were trying to get in while it's lifted.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Ms. Morgan, did your department provide any advice to the minister or any rationale against lifting the Romanian visa requirement?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Advice and analysis is always done within our visa policy framework.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Were there any specific points that were raised with regard to potential issues in lifting the visa requirement on Romania?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** When we look at our visa policy and our visa framework, we have a whole range of issues that we look at for any country regarding their travel documents: the management of their own systems, our level of collaboration with them, and their governance. There are a whole range of factors that go into the decision-making regarding visas.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We've seen nearly 300 Romanians claim asylum in Canada in a one-month period.

Minister, have you undertaken any efforts with the Romanian embassy or government to put in place preventative measures to stop this trend from increasing?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** I can answer that. We've met with the ambassador here in Ottawa.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** When?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** Approximately two and a half weeks ago.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Okay, and what measures are being put in place to reverse this trend?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** They're working very closely with us. They too, like us, want to see a sustainable visa lift with Romania.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Is there a number that you've set with them, in terms of how if we get to a certain point we will reinstate the visa?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** There is a threshold in place.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Which is...?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** That's not a public figure. Out of respect for the relationship with Romania, we've agreed that we would not share that figure, so that's not a public figure.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Is that within a calendar-year period?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** It's within a 12-month period.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Okay. Why would you not share that with this committee?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** As I said—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Minister, what is the number that you've set as an acceptable threshold for Romanian asylum claims? Was that included in the negotiating terms for CETA?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We look at a range of issues in terms of our visa policy, which includes numbers, but which also includes other factors.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you, Ms. Morgan.

To the minister, what is that threshold and was it included as a bargaining chip with CETA?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** When we make any decisions on visa lifts or visa reimpositions, there are a number of factors that have to be considered. Our visa policy framework is comprehensive. It's not just based on asylum claims, even though—

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. MacKinnon has said that there is a threshold.

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** —that is one of the categories. It looks at that. It looks at immigration violations. It looks at document integrity and so on.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to end there. We're quite a bit over on the five minutes.

Minister, you promised us an hour. We started a minute or two late, could you do a little bit more?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Mr. Anandasangaree.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, and your staff for doing this.

I want to just focus on the refugee numbers. With respect to the three-year projection for the overall numbers for the next three years, could you indicate what the numbers are, the quantum are, for refugees for each of these years?

• (1300)

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** The total number for refugees and protected persons for 2018 is 43,000. Out of that, for protected persons in Canada it's 16,000 for this year. Resettled refugees, which combines a number of them, is 27,000. Of those resettled refugees, there are 7,500 for the government assisted. Blended visa office-referred is 1,500. Privately sponsored is 18,000, which is, by the way, almost more than four times what the previous government had under their program.

That's the program that is used to sponsor vulnerable people, including survivors of Daesh. I just wanted to point that out.

For next year, that number, I don't know if you want to know specific...?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** You can give us the overall, then maybe the....

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** For 2018, the overall number is 43,000. That's refugees and protected persons. For 2019, it's 45,650. For 2020 it's 48,700. In each of those years the privately sponsored refugee numbers go up by a big margin.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** I do have to commend you for that, Minister, because it's an area I know is of really high need. I was able to visit some of the refugee camps in Bangladesh. This is one of those things that came up over and over again.

I just want to pick up on something I know you and I have had many conversations about, and that's with respect to legacy files. Based on my conversations with the IRB, it would appear that there is a path to address the legacy files.

Can you indicate whether those numbers, and I think the last number I heard from them is just over 5,000, would be part of the 2018 figures?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** Some were part of the 2017 numbers because they were processed then and they would have had to apply at that time. Some would apply this year.

I must commend you for your work on the legacy refugees issue. As you know, the Immigration and Refugee Board put together a task force to tackle the legacy cases. They are actually working really hard. They have an approval rate of about 35%. This is from January to September 2017. They made almost 400 finalizations of many of the legacy cases. They are continuing to work through those legacy cases to make sure that those people are given closure in terms of their files.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** I just have to say that is an area that's been a source of a great deal of stress, because when the previous government introduced the new legislation, people were in queue for a very long time.

With respect to the H and C stream, where would they fit with respect to the numbers? Do we have any indication as to whether those numbers will go up each year? If so, are additional resources going into that stream for the processing?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** For the humanitarian considerations and other stream, as part of this plan this year we're holding steady at 3,500, but for 2019, there's a jump to 4,250. For 2020, there's a small increase to 4,500 people.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Finally, with respect to the privately sponsored refugee applications, I know that you had indicated that at least for the first year it's four times what the previous government had allowed. I think towards 2020, if I'm not mistaken, it will be upward of five times.

How does that compare with other countries in terms of resettlement? I know there are some in Europe. I know Canada is amongst the top. Do you know how we compare?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen:** In terms of privately sponsored refugees, we're now one of only two countries that have this model. Canada used to be the only country that had that. Now the U.K. has a so-called community refugee sponsorship initiative, which they learned from Canada, but the numbers are very small. We're the only country in the world that allows ordinary Canadians and organizations and faith groups to sponsor refugees.

That program works really well. The outcomes are much better than they are for the government-sponsored refugees. Also, it costs half the money that it costs the government to process government refugees, which is why we like this program and why there's an increasing number every year for the next—

• (1305)

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

We're going to pause there. The officials will stay.

Ms. Kwan, we will start with you and continue that round. You will have two chances in the next round.

We'll take a brief pause, and thank the minister.

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

**The Chair:** Could we come back to order?

We will continue our questioning with you, Ms. Kwan. You have a little over three minutes. Because Ms. Rempel had a little bit more time and Mr. Anandasangaree had more time, you get about four minutes this round. Then we will get to the seven-minute round.

This gives me a chance before that question to thank the officials once again, not only for appearing before us. That's your job and we're glad you do that, but I also thank you for your public service. It is great to see that. This is a department that stretches everyone who works there, so on behalf of our committee, thank you for your public service.

Ms. Kwan.

- (1310)

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

Thank you to the officials.

At the committee, officials confirmed that the cost-benefit analysis as it relates to paragraph 38(1)(c) does not consider the benefits aspect of the applicants. Clearly this is a flawed process. Now that it has been brought to the attention of the officials, has the application evaluation process for paragraph 38(1)(c) changed to include the benefits analysis component?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** As the minister noted, we are in the midst of a fundamental review of the policy, which will consider all of the aspects of the policy including ensuring that applicants are treated in a fair and equitable manner, and that the policy aligns with Canadian values regarding inclusion, which includes both costs and benefits.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Has the policy changed since that time, or are we still using the same policy at the moment?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We're engaged in a fulsome review of the policy, which includes both costs and benefits of all aspects of the policy.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** In the application evaluation of individual cases, are benefits being evaluated in the processing of those cases right now?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Current cases are being evaluated under existing guidelines and policy frameworks. Should there be a change in the policy, then we would introduce new procedures.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you, so no changes have been made right now and cases are still being processed based on these flawed evaluation criteria.

For how many cases currently in the system does paragraph 38(1)(c) apply?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** We would have to get the number for you, but the testimony before the committee in previous appearances has been that it is typically around 900 to 1,000 cases annually.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** If I could get that number specifically for the committee, I would appreciate it.

How long has each case been waiting to be processed? Can we have that number attached to the number of cases? Is it one, two, five years? That would be very helpful as well. Can I get confirmation that I can get that information?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We will look into whether that information is actually collected and available on individual cases. If it is, we will certainly provide it. We can certainly provide the number.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The government has put up on their website that for the caregivers program, effective November 29, 2019, those who have not met the two-year work requirement will not be eligible to apply for permanent resident status. I know that the minister, since that time, has said they're looking at this, that it was a pilot program, and so on. The issue that I'm bringing forward is this. Individuals who came in 2017 and—through no fault of their own—had their employment interrupted for whatever reason, will not meet the 24-month requirement.

Will they be penalized?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** As we noted, the pilot program was always for five years, and it is destined to sunset in 2019. However, we're looking at how they're working and what the path forward is for permanent residency for caregivers, including those who have been working since they got here or whose work has been interrupted.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** For example, if an individual has an employer who's abusive, and through a lot of courage she's had to resign that position, she will not meet that 24-month requirement by November 29, 2019.

- (1315)

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to interrupt you. That's a very important point, but that was four minutes. You'll get another round in here.

Mr. Tabbara, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to continue on my line of questioning from before. The trend of our population is an aging demographic, the same as I pointed out before within Germany. We know that five million Canadians are set to retire by 2035. What kinds of figures do we take in, or what kinds of measures do we look at when we factor in what other countries are doing, to ensure that we decrease the median age of our population and have a proper ratio of workers to retirees?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** This is one of the important factors that was considered in the development of the multi-year levels plan. We know that throughout Canadian history, generations of newcomers have had a positive impact on the Canadian economy. Looking forward, in particular given the aging of the labour force and the need for new skills, the immigration program has the opportunity to really benefit the Canadian economy in that respect. We look at that very carefully.

There are a number of pathways that are primarily economic within the multi-year levels plan, such as the provincial nominee program, the federal express program, and the Atlantic immigration pilot. All of these, from a permanent immigration perspective, are designed to contribute directly to the economy and our economic growth, but so are our family reunification and humanitarian programs. We see, for example, that the children of refugees have higher educational outcomes than Canadian-born children. Across all elements of the multi-year levels plan, we see growth, and that growth will contribute to the economic vitality of the country.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thank you very much.

If I can just continue on with that, my colleague from this side mentioned international students. Oftentimes, when they finish their studies here in Canada, they've been here for quite a few years, they've learned the language, and they've become accustomed to the Canadian lifestyle. They may not have a specific job offer, but they can offer tremendous skills in the labour shortage that we currently have in Canada.

Oftentimes, we want to keep those international students here. What are some of the things we are continuing to do to keep international students here that will really help us in our job growth and to close the gap on our labour shortage?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** One of the key factors that was really driving the creation of the express entry program on the economic side was the recognition of the importance of human capital in terms of education and also language to the economic success of immigrants here. Of course, students fall clearly within that category.

There are a variety of potential streams within the immigration program that would enable students to stay in Canada after they've completed their studies. They can stay temporarily under our work permit provisions. They can stay through the provincial nominee program. They will have preference in the express entry program because of their Canadian education and their education levels. Also, in the Atlantic immigration pilot, one of the key features of that pilot program is to look at how we transition students from being students in Atlantic Canada to working in Atlantic Canada, to being permanent residents.

We are building pathways for students across many of the paths within the immigration program.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Since we're speaking of Atlantic Canada, I'll pass it to my Atlantic colleague.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Tabbara.

Another group of Canadians who have come to Atlantic Canada are people from the Balkans, including Romanians and Bulgarians. They've opened up lots of great and wonderful businesses. They're great members of our community and they were very happy to see the visa requirements lifted last year so that their friends and family and relatives could come. Given the previous line of questioning, I just want to have some assurance that as more immigrants from those areas may choose to come to Canada as skilled...or under the PNP or economic migrant class, that this won't affect the ability of visitors from those countries to come under the current visa rules.

Could you describe for us, in general terms, without breaching the confidentiality to Romania or Bulgaria, how that process works and why we're so happy that Bulgarians and Romanians can come to this country, either as visitors or as economic class migrants?

• (1320)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of how that visa policy works, it's a broad framework that's multi-faceted, that looks across a range of issues and criteria to help us to assess whether it would meet both our program objectives and our national interests. Socio-economic trends in the countries, migration issues, travel document integrity, border management, safety and security issues, human rights issues, and bilateral and multilateral issues are all considered, as well as the level of co-operation and collaboration that we have with the countries that we are working with on these issues.

All of those things are taken into account, and certainly we recognize in our visa policy framework the importance of tourism, of business travellers coming to Canada, from an economic perspective and also from a family perspective, in terms of striking the right balance between facilitation and integrity in all of our programs.

**Mr. Nick Whalen:** Would you say, then, that people who are coming as economic class migrants wouldn't be counted as a negative towards Romania and Bulgaria, in the mechanics of the evaluation, and that additional economic class migration wouldn't prejudice the visa system?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** One of the objectives of the Atlantic immigration program is built on a recognition of the need to attract more permanent residents into the region. One thing that we have seen that is successful, not just for attraction but also retention, because that's a key feature of the program, is that there are communities there and those communities build. When immigrants come to those regions, they have community members who are already there and that seems to be a kind of stickiness factor.

If there are immigrants coming from those regions, I would think that would be a positive thing for the Atlantic program.

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

Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** I'm going to allow my colleague to ask a couple of questions first, Mr. Chair. Thanks.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** You're so generous. Thank you.

Going back to my previous line of questioning, how many Bulgarian nationals have made asylum claims since the visa requirements were lifted in December?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** We'll look for Bulgaria. It's much lower. The asylum claims from Bulgaria are not concerning, but we'll look for it and share it if we get it.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Okay, so will you table that with the committee?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** For sure.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** My understanding is that typically a threshold is set when calculating the number of people who would make asylum claims, who come into the levels. Usually a threshold is set, for any country 5%, or something, of a certain number of people who come into a country. Once it gets to that point we would start talking about a visa review. Has that number or percentage threshold changed for any countries over the last couple of years?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I'm not sure I understand the question.

Is it whether the number of asylum claimants from different countries has shifted over the years or whether...?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** How would the department trigger a visa review at this point?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The department looks at a variety of factors, including the factors that I mentioned previously, and it's a very holistic review. Certainly numbers are one part of that and when we see numbers increasing from different countries we take a close look at that. That is a key aspect that feeds into our visa policy.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Could you provide the committee with the numbers of spousal sponsorship applications for 2016 and 2017 found to be fraudulent?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I don't believe we have that number with us. If it is available, we will provide it to the committee.

• (1325)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Great. Thank you. I know it was about 5% in 2015. I'm wondering if you could express that number both in terms of an actual case number as well as a percentage of the total number of spousal sponsorship applications.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Yes, we will provide the numbers that we have on that. We just don't have them with us.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** My understanding is that the rules around spousal sponsorship have been relaxed. Are you no longer tracking the data on fraudulent spousal sponsorship?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We don't have that data with us.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** But you are tracking it.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I believe we are tracking it, and I'm saying we will get you the data we have, but we don't have it with us for this committee appearance.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** But to be clear, you are tracking...?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We track fraud across all our business lines. It's an important element of our program integrity.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Given the relaxation in rules on spousal sponsorship is there any set number or percentage of applications that would be found to be fraudulent that you have flagged within the department before remedial measures would be taken?

**The Chair:** Ms. Rempel, just to be fair to the witnesses who prepared to come to speak on levels, to give them a little leeway, because I don't expect they are necessarily prepared to speak on those issues, I'm reminding committee members that when we invite witnesses on an agenda item that's what they prepare for.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, many lines of questions have been asked by my colleagues on spousal sponsorship. It directly relates to the immigration levels, and I don't

understand why my colleagues from the Liberal Party weren't given a similar warning. I would ask that my questions to the minister stand.

**The Chair:** Your question stands. I'm just saying that I doubt that our witnesses would have been able to prepare on issues that they were not invited to speak on. The issue with respect to the number of spousal sponsorships are absolutely in line with the levels discussion. The number of cases of fraud I don't believe are related directly to the levels. However, please continue.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Again, I would ask you to table that information with the committee.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We do have integrated risk management and fraud management frameworks for various business lines that include careful monitoring for fraud across all our business lines. That's part of our ongoing business. Sometimes these things can be across a whole program. We look at it or the issues might come up in particular regions, but we have a very active program to track fraud in the programs.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Does the department anticipate or has it done any analysis on the potential impacts on immigration levels should the government adopt the zero draft or the UN compact for safe, orderly and regular migration?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** No.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Is any analysis being planned as part of that consultation process?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We are obviously looking at the issues around that compact, but at this point it's zero draft, and whether there would be an impact on levels would be very premature to assess.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** In terms of the government's involvement in the consultation on that draft, is there no work going on in the department on the potential impact on levels?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** We're doing lots of work on it and we're analyzing the zero draft. Our sense at this point is that there will not be a significant effect on the levels because Canada already adheres to many of the principles you see in that zero draft: responsibility sharing, resettlement programs, a number of pathways for refugees and migrants writ large. We think we're on track with where it is now.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** How about the impact on the \$440 million included in the minister's statement? Has that been analyzed?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** As I said, at this point while we're very involved in the negotiations, we don't see a hit either on level space or on the fiscal framework associated with levels at this early stage.



**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Does the department plan on putting in place any sort of budgetary analysis in terms of the impact of adopting the global compact in terms of its budgetary allocation in this year's budget?

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** Certainly as the negotiations roll out over the next number of months and we have a better sense of where they will go, that is certainly something we will look at.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Is there a particular position the government is taking in terms of levels as it relates to the global compact on migration that is being proposed?

• (1330)

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** Do you mean additional levels?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Yes.

**Mr. Paul MacKinnon:** Not specifically at this point. It's just that more countries should sign up and look at resettlement issues.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** As well, going back to the minister's comment that \$440 million will be budgeted over the next three years to support levels, do you foresee any impact on that particular figure should the global compact be adopted in its current form by the government?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Not at this time.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire.

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

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** In regard to the Romanian situation and the cap that has been placed on the Romanian immigrants coming in, is it safe to say, then, without giving us the numbers, that a good deal of the increase the minister talked about between 2018, 2019, and 2020 may be made up of those persons coming into Canada, or will the number be proportionate to other countries that we're bringing these refugees in from?

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

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We've seen a very diverse group of countries represented in asylum claims into Canada from all over the world.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan.

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

I'll go back to my question about the caregiver program. Given the policy as it states today, for those who have not made the application, or those who will not meet the two-year work requirement by November 29, 2019, what will happen to them in the instance where they are faced with, let's say, an abusive employer and have to quit their job and then secure other employment, and therefore, not be able to meet their 24-month requirement? What is the policy in dealing with them right now?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** There could be individuals in that situation, and that is something, we will be looking at as we look at the pathway to permanent residency for caregivers when the pilot project ends.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** That is to say you don't know and you won't know until November 29, 2019.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** I would expect we would know before then.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** When will you know?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** At the moment we're in the process of reviewing the pilot program, reviewing its results, and developing options for a path forward. We understand this is an issue that caregivers will want some clarity on as soon as possible, and we're working on it in order to be prepared for that 2019 deadline.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay, so you don't have a timeline because you can't seem to give me a timeline at the moment. For those individuals who might be stuck in this situation, in your review process are you consulting widely with caregivers around this situation?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We're reviewing the whole program, and that will include consultations, yes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** How will they be able to contribute with their points of view? Will you be having town halls, public meetings? Will it be by invitation? How can people provide their points of view to the government for consideration?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The nature of the consultations has not yet been established, but we will make sure that committee members are aware of it so that they can provide that information to caregivers. We will also directly provide information once we have a consultation process set out.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Can you also provide the committee with how many applications are in the system at the moment for those who came to Canada under the live-in caregiver program in 2017, just so we can understand how many people are likely going to be caught up in this system? Can you provide that number to the committee?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Yes, we will provide that number to the committee.

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

I'd like to turn to refugee issues for a minute.

How many applications are in the system for the one-year window of opportunity provision?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** We can provide that number to the committee. I don't have it with me today.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Could I receive that information and when the application was received by IRCC? If we can have that broken down by the country of origin, that would be appreciated.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** It has been noted.

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

Turning to parents and grandparents, the 2018 lottery has taken place. Can you advise the committee if all 10,000 spots have been taken up?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar (Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** The first part of that process is the notice of intent to apply, and we have received applications for that. The draw for the first tranche of that is going to be pretty soon, and we will do two or three rounds so that we can fill up the 10,000.

• (1335)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** So families have not been notified as to whether or not they have been selected through this lottery process. Did I hear that correctly?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** The notice to apply just finished on February 2, and we are now sorting out the duplicate applications and the incomplete ones. Then, we will be going out, pretty soon, this week only, for that purpose.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** People will be notified this week for 10,000 slots, and then—

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** People will be notified that we are doing a lottery system in which we actually invite those who are selected in two or three portions so that we get to the 10,000 number. For example, the first 5,000 will be invited so that they can put in a full application and go through that process, and then the second round will be another 5,000 applications.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** In last year's process, then, the people were notified that they were eligible or, as you say, had been chosen through the lottery. Have all 10,000 slots been utilized for the parents and grandparents reunification process?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** That is true. We actually got around 15,000-plus people. Out of that, we completed approximately 9,500 applications.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Yes, I know it is always oversubscribed because there are lots of people who want in on this program, but because of the lottery system, we don't know if they qualify or not through that process.

You're saying that out of that 10,000, 9,500 met the requirements. That means that there were 500 slots that were not subscribed. What happened to those 500 slots?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** We actually invited the 10,000, and then we went through the process of making sure the applications were complete. Sometimes when we invite them they do not actually apply.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** What happened to the 500 slots?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** That slot is actually up to the end of the year, so we have—

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** So they were lost.

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** We have that gap, but the multi-year immigration levels plan provides us with the opportunity to catch up.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Will that 500 be applied to this year, then, so that this year there will be 10,500 people invited to submit their full application?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** We generally keep a cap on the 10,000. However, the total number of people who line up may increase over time, for sure.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay, so the 500 slots will not be utilized for 2018.

I'm just trying to figure out what happened to the 500 slots.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The 500 slots were not utilized last year. It was the first year we had done this process, and it was not clear. I think it was a bit of a surprise to us, actually, that some of the

individuals who had been invited to apply did not submit applications in the end.

This year, we will be able to take that into account in order to reach the 10,000 limit, but our goal this year, as tabled in the multi-year immigration levels plan, is 10,000 for the year.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** The 500 slots were lost. Can you just confirm that?

**Dr. Harpreet Kochhar:** We actually put all the efforts towards bringing in those 10,000. However, if the applicants have failed to fill out the application and we do not have the completed application, we are unable to process them further.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** So the 500 slots were lost.

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to end that there. That was seven and a half minutes.

Mr. Anandasangaree, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be sharing my time with MP Badawey.

I want to pick up on the "groups of five" privately sponsored individuals. I know that there are varying timelines for regions. Can you indicate what the processing time would be for someone from south Asia? Would you have those numbers, at this point?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** I'm sorry, I don't have the numbers specifically for the groups of five applications for south Asia, but I can provide the information to the committee that our processing times generally for privately sponsored refugees—those sponsored by sponsorship agreement holders, as well as by groups of five, as well as community sponsors—have fallen. In December 2017, it was 52.7 months. It's now 34.7 months.

• (1340)

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** The numbers that are reflected here, then, as indicated by the minister—I believe it's 18,000 for 2018 and so on—reflect the timeline. What kinds of timelines would they have waited under in order to be processed this year?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** I'm not sure I understand that question. The advantage of increasing the number of spaces available for the privately sponsored refugees is that we can aggressively bring down the inventory of cases we have on hand so that we shorten the processing time.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** What I'm getting at is whether the 2018 number, which is 18,000 roughly for the groups of five, is based on the numbers that are processed this year, or based on the intake that you propose to process over the next 34 or 38 months, or whatever you have indicated?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** The 18,000 is based on the cases that we have on hand and have already received, not just groups of five but also people sponsored by the sponsorship agreement holders, although the numbers of cases put in by groups of five has increased quite a lot. That's why the numbers here are bigger and growing, because we want to address those inventories and bring the processing times down.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** I guess the numbers reflect when you issue the visa rather than when you get the application. Is that right?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Yes, the numbers in the levels plan are based on the number we would expect to process and land in Canada, and thus on individuals who were processed. Some of them may have already been processed at the end of last year, but we would expect them to land in Canada this year.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Okay.

Based on this, have you had any instances in which there was a change of circumstance in the original country whereby you have had to, en masse, disqualify particular candidates?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** Candidates are always assessed in the resettled refugee program under the parameters of the regulations. You look at whether or not someone has experienced persecution on a defined ground. You look at whether or not there's a durable solution where they are, outside their country of origin. You look at the country conditions in their original country. In some instances, country conditions have changed, but someone still may be persecuted nonetheless.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** How do you assess whether a country's situation has changed? On what basis do you assess that?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** We look at reports such as those of Amnesty International, human rights reports, those kinds of things, to get a sense of whether the situation on the ground in that country has changed. That's factored into the decision-making by the migration officers.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you.

I'm going to be passing the rest of my time to MP Badawey.

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.):** Thank you.

Today we've heard a lot of questions, and I think we all recognize the advantages of the direction that the minister, along with his team, is taking. We've heard from the advisory council on economic growth, from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and from Dan Kelly, the President and CEO of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a good thing. It's good for our economy, it's good for our social fabric, and it's also good for those we are going to affect from overseas.

That said, today we heard a lot of questions. Unfortunately, many times the minister and you weren't given the opportunity to answer fully the questions being asked. My question to you is twofold. First, what kind of impact will this plan have on wait times and backlogs in various streams. Second, what will this plan do to improve family reunification?

What I'm most interested in, however, members of staff, is the filling in of the gaps that you weren't allowed to fill in before on account of being interrupted while giving your answers.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** We are actually very excited with the adoption of a multi-year levels plan this year. This is a new thing. I think it's fair to say that our provincial colleagues and also the service provider organizations who work in this area are very happy about it as well. The reason for that is that it allows us a planning horizon in order to be prepared as we increase immigration levels. It allows us to be prepared from a processing perspective, and it allows our service providers to be prepared to welcome and integrate new Canadians into the country.

I think that the multi-year plan, and the fact that the levels are increasing over a period of years, really will help us to plan to address some of the processing time issues that we have seen over many years.

As you know, we end up with backlogs when the intake into a particular stream isn't matched by the levels plan, so that we don't have enough levels to actually bring in the number of people who are coming and getting into the queue.

Over time, the department has made significant progress on that due to important initiatives that have been taken. For example, on spousal sponsorships, with increasing inventory, we have managed to decrease the inventory from 75,000 to 15,000. The processing time for new applications is within 12 months, and because we've built into this multi-year levels plan an increase in levels every year, we anticipate being able to keep it at 12 months.

Similarly, for parents and grandparents, we have limited the intake, but we have increased the number of parents and grandparents that will be admitted over a number of years. That also will allow us to make progress on the processing times on the parents and grandparents front.

Finally, on the program for private sponsors of refugees, I think one thing that is built into the levels plan is a very significant increase in the number of privately sponsored refugees that will be brought in every year. Again, the purpose of that is expressly to reduce the processing time and to bring in those people who are waiting and who have been waiting for quite a while to come.

• (1345)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Badawey. Welcome, I didn't get a chance to welcome you to the meeting. It's wonderful to have you.

We have time for one more round of five minutes from Mr. Maguire. That is provided we have a short discussion about Tuesday's meeting.

If anybody is anticipating that we need a long discussion about it, put your hand up.

All right, I'm sensing we'll have a short discussion.

Mr. Maguire.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thank you, and thanks to all the staff for being here today from this department.

I was most interested in the numbers that you just indicated, Ms. Morgan. About 70% of the case files that come through my constituency office end up dealing with immigration. Some of those people say the process is broken. All I'm saying today is, if this were passports, collecting EI, or OAS differences, there would be a front page story somewhere.

Can you just give me an update as to.... The minister has indicated in his comments—I believe I made a note here—that the private system is much better and much easier to work with than the government system, in regard to settlement. I'm looking at your thoughts on how...and you just indicated that more private settlement was very valuable in this whole process. Is that because of the hands-on nature of the people who are bringing these persons in?

I'm wondering how your department helps those private settlements in selecting the people who come.

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** Both the privately sponsored and the government assisted refugee programs play an important part for Canada in meeting our humanitarian responsibilities.

What we have seen over the last few years is that, because of the great enthusiasm of the public that was brought forward because of the Syrian refugee initiative, we had a very large increase in the number of applications for privately sponsored refugees. That is why we have increased, on a go-forward basis, the numbers under the privately sponsored refugee category, in order to respond to that enthusiasm from private sponsors.

In terms of settlement, they are eligible for the same settlement services as government sponsored refugees, and they're eligible for those services for a number of years.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Thanks. The provincial nominee program has worked very well in Manitoba. I was in the provincial government there for about 14 years, and I know the minister touched on it. It's a good program. Can that be adopted and used in the whole country, and are you looking at expanding the opportunities under that program?

I know you are, but I'm wondering if it wouldn't be wise to expand the number of people provinces are allowed to bring in under these programs.

• (1350)

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** The multi-year levels plan that has been tabled in Parliament expands the PNP by 33%, which is the largest single increase across any category of immigration, and it recognizes the importance of that program.

Also, I would just note that Manitoba has really been a model in this regard. It's seen as a model in terms of not just attracting but also retaining and putting those supports around immigrants to stay in Manitoba.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** Yes, thank you.

We just did a study, and you've referred to it, the Atlantic immigration program. The biggest problem there is getting people to be permanent residents in the Atlantic region. Can you comment on how the PNP can be used to bring more success, particularly to the Atlantic region?

**Ms. Marta Morgan:** When we were developing the Atlantic immigration program, I heard that Manitoba was really sort of a beacon for that and that people were looking to the Manitoba

experience. One of the things that was built into the Atlantic immigration program was the responsibility of employers to develop a plan to retain those employees in the region, and that seems to be a key aspect, that the employers take responsibility not only for the job but also to work with the local service providers and to have a plan for retention and be very mindful of it. Above and beyond the normal PNP program, it's key to put extra effort into making those community connections and those sorts of things that help people to stay.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I think the amount of economic activity in the Maritimes may be a limiting factor in regard to the amount of PNP usage. If there were more businesses, obviously there could be more use of it, and of course, that's beyond the scope of your department in regard to the economic activity in that region. Has your department suggested anything in that area that would stimulate activity in that region?

While I'm at it, I'll just ask. IRCC was not meeting the targets in some of the most up-to-date numbers and getting economic permanent residents to settle outside of...not just to get them into the Maritimes, but outside of Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal—

**The Chair:** I'm afraid I need to stop you there, Mr. Maguire. Sorry about that.

**Mr. Larry Maguire:** I think we need more in urban areas. That's all I'm saying.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm not going to suspend the meeting, if you wouldn't mind just sitting so that I don't lose too much time, because we have to get to the House for 2 p.m.

The clerk reminds me that it's my call whether or not we have a meeting on Tuesday. However, I don't like to do that without advice and input from committee members. I think the most expeditious way of doing this—I'm not suggesting a recorded vote but a show of hands, and it would be whether or not.... I'm not going to judge. Some people want to be in the lock-up. Some people want time to prepare other things. I would like a show of hands of those of you who would like me to call a meeting on Tuesday.

I see five of you.

What about those of you who would not like me to call a meeting on Tuesday? I have two noes, and I've got the rest....

I am getting a sense that we should have a meeting. I just wanted to check that out with you. If you want to be in the lock-up, that means it will be your responsibility to get a substitute for the meeting.

Thank you again to the officials from our department. Your answers have been helpful for the committee and we will look forward to some written responses for some very specific questions on which the committee asked for more detail.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.







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