



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 033 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

—
Chair

The Honourable Andrew Telegdi

All parliamentary publications are available on the
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

Wednesday, April 6, 2005

• (1400)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)): I'm going to call the meeting to order because we have a distinguished panel, and it would be useful if we could get a few more extra minutes in, as this is an issue of major importance to the committee and, most importantly, to Canadians.

I'm going to start off with Mr. Rasheed.

It will be five minutes for each of the presenters, and then we'll have questions. I expect we'll have a few more committee members here.

Mr. Rasheed, could you please proceed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed (Visible Minority and Labour Relations Board): As you know already, my name is Muhammad Rasheed.

Mr. Chairman, we actually had the honour of presenting on the Citizenship Act last year, as well as a couple of years ago in 2003. I'm also glad that our MP, Diane Ablonczy, is part of this committee.

With me is Mr. Vinay Dey, a board member of the National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development issues and development; and Dr. Masood Parvez, who is also a board member and the president of the Pakistan-Canada Association. The Pakistan-Canada Association is part of the National Federation of Pakistani Canadians. Vinay Dey is also a board member of the National Indo-Canadians Council.

I think all of you should have copies of our presentation. I have also given out a position paper on this issue in the form of a booklet.

The Chair: We only have it in English, so the rule is that we can't distribute it until it gets translated, which it will once we get back.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: We have two copies in French of the position paper in the booklet form, but I think the presentation is....

The Chair: The only thing we have here is in English.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I'll give it to you. I actually gave it to you outside.

The Chair: Okay, we'll go ahead.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: Ms. Vinay Dey and Dr. Masood Parvez will be answering some of the questions you have.

You have probably heard a lot on this subject of recognition and assessment of credentials and prior learning, but this is specifically about the visible minority perspective.

This paper was actually done with the input of about 35 national organizations under the umbrella of the National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development. The paper is about eight pages long. I cannot read everything, but I think I can highlight the main points.

Canada faces escalating challenges in maintaining an adequate supply of highly skilled and knowledgeable people with the right kinds of learning and credentials in its workforce.

Like its competitors, Canada needs this human resource base to compete successfully in global markets. The reason we need more recognition of credentials is that one of every five workforce members is a visible minority and an immigrant. Recent immigrants—those arriving within 10 years of the 1996 census—account for about 6% of the workforce. By the year 2011, 100% of Canada's net labour force growth will be from immigration.

Recognizing credentials will help us to compensate for the brain drain. In 1986, 17,000 people migrated to the United States. By 1997, 98,000 had migrated. So you can see how much of a brain drain that has been on the workforce. By recognizing the credentials of foreign-trained people, we can actually have a brain gain instead of a brain drain. But because they are not recognized at this time, there is brain waste.

This definition of prior learning assessment and recognition was specifically developed by the Canadian Labour Force Development Board. This board was actually abandoned by the federal government in 1998.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is a process of identifying, assessing, and recognizing what a person knows and can do. The process can take various forms and the outcomes can be used for a large number of purposes relevant to the goals of individuals, the labour market partners, and society at large.

The target population is visible minorities at this time. In 1996, 57% of immigrants came from Asia or visible minority countries. If this is done properly, 340,000 Canadians will benefit.

The barriers to recognizing credentials and prior learning are many, but we focus on four of them: the complicated, multi-jurisdictional framework of provincial governments; post-secondary education institutions; professional or licensing bodies, which have the power to certify certain persons; and the employer, but employers make up a very small proportion of the barriers.

There is no national standard. Even Canadians moving from one province to another province face the same kinds of barriers.

Testing and training are also barriers. The whole cycle of recognizing the credentials of personnel becomes a vicious cycle. And it is time consuming. A lot of people actually give up and become what you could call underemployed. They go through the process and then we cannot take advantage of the education they have.

• (1405)

On page 4, there is a summary list of barriers; there are 16 of them. I cannot go through them because of time constraints.

Another important part is cost for non-accreditation. One is increased costs to the welfare system and social services. There is also productivity loss, efficiency loss, and loss of revenue to the Government of Canada. Those are the four main points.

The benefit of recognizing credentials and prior learning is that most of the benefits will go to educational institutions. They will meet societal needs, provide more life-long learning opportunities, make better use of resources, provide access to a wider range of potential learners, attract more learners to learning programs in aggregate, and enable institutional growth.

Individuals seeking accreditation...they are listed on the presentation in front of you. There are benefits to employers as well. On page 7 there are recommendations for actions to overcome barriers and obstacles. Again, there is policy and program reform, structural and institutional reform, and then largely engaging all the stakeholders.

We also have a presentation by the Honourable Hedy Fry that I did not include in my submission, but I think you have all seen it. We did this thing in Ottawa at the beginning of this year, and some of our recommendations are also in this presentation as well.

I think they realize the need, but it's time to take action.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we have Ms. High.

Ms. Sandy High (Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry): Thank you.

I'm representing the Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environment Industry. We actually changed our name two days ago, so excuse me if I happen to slip in our old acronym called CCHREI. We're now called the Environmental Careers Organization of Canada, or ECO Canada.

ECO Canada was established in 1992 as a result of a government study indicating that there would be human resource issues in the environment sector. ECO Canada is a not-for-profit organization and we're a Canadian corporation. Part of our mandate is to research the environment sector.

We completed a study in 2004, our 2000 environmental labour market report, and it indicates that there are over 11,400 available positions in Canada in the environment sector at the present time. The only concern is that most of these positions are mid- to senior-level positions and are highly technical. As well, because environment is a technical industry, 66% of people in the industry

have post-secondary education, be it at the diploma level or the university level.

We've identified with the national occupational standards for people working in the environment industry, so we go back every five years to industry and indicate what new skills and knowledge people need to have in order to be competent working in their specific areas.

We have segmented the industry into three general areas. One is natural resources, and that involves people who work in air and land—air quality, land reclamation, and those areas. Another segment is conservation and natural resources, and that involves areas such as agriculture, forestry, mining—those types of things. The third area is called environmental sustainability, and that involves people who are in research, policy development, marketing, communications, and those types of things.

Based on those subsectors—and there are a total of 19 subsectors—we have developed competency standards for each one of those areas. Those competencies are based at the university level as well as at the diploma level. As a result of the development of competencies, we have developed the Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board. That is a national voluntary certification system where people can be certified to be a Canadian certified environmental practitioner, or CCEP, or if they fail to meet the standards and qualifications of a CCEP, they can qualify as a Canadian environmental practitioner in training, or CEPIT.

We've talked with Athabasca University, which is an online university, your e-learning university. We are in discussions with them at the present time to develop a post-graduate certificate program. There would be 11 certificates based on 11 of the subsectors. For each of those certificates they would complete 10 courses worth three credits each. Because it's an e-learning program, they would have to have at least three courses that they would take through Athabasca University, but they could take the other seven courses throughout Canada. There are 25 colleges and universities that have accredited e-learning programs, and they could use those toward the certificate.

Where this leads to on the immigration side is that because it's an e-learning system, people across the world can apply to Athabasca University for e-learning programs. What we've discussed with the university is that folks from those countries can apply to the university. They can start taking the program, and as a result that would reduce the barrier, perceived or otherwise, to industry because they will have had a university education in Canada, a certificate.

•(1410)

On that basis as well they could apply under the CECAB program, and we could establish a network with industry, because CCHREI is an industry-established and industry-led organization. We could match those folks who are in their home country with a company in Canada and start building a relationship while they're taking this post-graduate course. In that way, the individual would be able to establish a rapport with a company, they would be ensuring that they will have a job when they get here, and they would understand the certification and any other types of credentials they would need in order to work in Canada. It would also reduce the stress from the immigrant's point of view in terms of where they would be locating and some of the issues around that.

As well, from the company's point of view, they would be hiring a competent person, because competency would be assessed in the country of origin. They would also be assured that they do have credentials, as they would have been approved from an accredited university here in Canada. So we are looking at this as a unique forum for bringing competent and qualified people into Canada.

Thank you.

•(1415)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we hear from the Calgary Chamber, Ms. Burgener.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener (Calgary Chamber of Commerce): Good afternoon, and welcome to Calgary. I appreciate the opportunity.

Hi, Diane.

The skills and labour shortage is a priority for the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, for there are serious implications for our members as well as the business community in general. So we are leading and participating in a number of initiatives designed specifically to address these shortages. The chamber has actively participated with our post-secondary institutions and the business community to develop the recently released human capital report, which has a number of strategies to look at skill shortages. We appreciate the opportunity to address your standing committee, and thank you for coming to Calgary to hear the business perspective on these issues.

Recently, the Calgary West Foundation surveyed Albertans and found that many were aware of the impending labour and skills shortages, but few believed that immigration provided a solution. Indeed, many were misinformed regarding the number of immigrants Alberta received. More importantly, there was little appreciation for their contribution to our economy.

To address these concerns, the chamber formally created the Talent Pool, which is a project focused on addressing the employment needs of the underemployed. In collaboration with business, education, and the two levels of government, it provides businesses with information and employment practices to help them access these pools of talent that are specifically overlooked. The Talent Pool deals with youth, older workers, immigrants, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities. Our website's address is available to you in our brief.

We want to speak specifically on the recognition of international experience and credentials of immigrants. Immigrants who apply to come to Canada need accurate and timely information about the Canadian job market and what it takes to find employment in their chosen professions. They need to know what is required to translate and present their credentials and education within the context of Canadian standards to Canadian employers.

Any pre-qualifying that can be carried out while the new immigrant waits for clearance to come to Canada is very beneficial. Delaying this process may diminish skill sets, necessitating training, and limit employment opportunities upon arrival in Canada. Both experiences negatively affect earnings and often cause hardship. Depending on the timeframe, such hardships can compromise resettlement and place additional burdens on networks providing assistance to immigrants.

As proficiency in English is essential in a professional workplace setting, and the Conference Board of Canada workplace essential skills are required for employment, training should be available online and provided either before the immigrant lands in Canada or shortly thereafter.

On professional licensing, the inability to facilitate professional credentialing limits business from accessing the international experience, skills, and training of new immigrants. We have begun working locally with a number of professional associations to address these delays, and we encourage your committee to do the same nationally. While we're not advocating compromising Canadian standards, credentialing bodies need to move quickly to capture the talent and skills of new immigrants before they get stale.

On shortages in the trades, Alberta and Calgary are experiencing severe shortages in the trades, specifically millwrights, heavy-duty mechanics, power technicians, heavy equipment operators, and truckers. The system to invite immigrants to Canada should be altered to admit those with these much-needed skills to assist us in our economy.

On settlement funds, compared to Toronto or Vancouver, Calgary welcomes a small number of new immigrants—about 10,000 a year. However, Calgary attracts several thousand more who relocate to our city from within Canada in search of employment. We recommend a tracking mechanism that could transfer settlement funds with the immigrant. The jobs are here, and the appropriate resources should be available to prepare immigrants for employment in the Calgary marketplace.

In conclusion, the Calgary chamber is pleased that the additional funding of \$380 million announced in the recent budget is being provided for new immigrant integration. We respectfully submit that those funds be dedicated to eliminating the waiting lists for ESL training and workplace preparation, as 700 new immigrants are presently waiting for those services here in Calgary.

The Chamber of Commerce will be pleased to provide additional information on the Talent Pool project and its engagement with the Calgary business community. On behalf of our coordinator, Julie Ball, who was unable to be here this afternoon, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to present.

Thank you.

• (1420)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

To Mr. Bray, from the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, let me start by thanking you for lunch. We had a pleasant visit, and I recommend that if anybody on the panel hasn't been there, they should go down and visit.

Mr. Rob Bray (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society): I'm going to be a little less passionate than I was this morning, but I do want to make a few points. I have almost 20 years of experience serving immigrants and have spent the majority of this time as an employment counsellor. I've counselled between 3,000 and 4,000 immigrant job seekers, and I've dealt with nearly every occupation and trade.

I want to talk about what I'm going to refer to as accrediting bodies. These are organizations—self-regulated professions, government authorities, post-secondary institutions—that look at foreign credentials and assess them. I want to talk about their behaviour.

This topic has been under discussion in this country for close to 20 years. The first major conference I attended on the subject was in 1986. I can't count the number of round tables, workshops, presentations, conferences, that have been done on this. I strongly suggest that you take advantage of this 20 years of work.

First, I want to present a couple of practices that I would suggest the Government of Canada not engage in. We don't need more research. There's been tons of it. Over 10 years ago, the Province of Ontario and the Province of Alberta did major task forces. They were in complete agreement, and they produced a solid set of recommendations.

Secondly, we don't need any more pilot or demonstration projects. A project that's going to serve 24 doctors is not going to do anything, and it might even let some people off the hook. Today in Canada there are four provincial agencies that assess credentials. This has been of limited use. Such an assessment, unless it's accepted by an accrediting body or a licensing authority, is similar to a GED for professionals. It's not much help at all. In fact, it gets people's hopes up without giving them what they need.

Finally, there are a ton of websites people have put up to explain to prospective immigrants what goes on. We don't need more. Contrary to the opinion of a lot of people in my sector, I don't think the information available abroad is that bad. The problem is that emigration is fundamentally the act of an optimist. If you're

preparing to emigrate to Canada, practically speaking, you're going to need to delude yourself of some of your more optimistic expectations.

The trouble with this approach is that it makes the immigrants the problem. The problem is not the immigrants. The problem is the behaviour and conduct of the licensing bodies. By way of a solution, I have some practical suggestions: a few small ones, and one big one.

The regulation of trades and occupations is under provincial jurisdiction. But there are some things the federal government could do. First, you could extend Millennium bursaries and student loans to people who are dealing with very expensive re-accrediting processes. I would love to see a charter challenge program. Every lawyer I've consulted has told me that this would be a slam-dunk. The federal government could make some funding available for people to bring lawsuits. If one lawsuit were won, it might induce better behaviour on the part of some of the other bodies.

Second, the federal government licenses certain fields, including pilots and maritime occupations. How good is your own practice? You should take a look at it. The last time I was out with a pilot trying to accredit, it was not a fair system, and it was insanely expensive.

Finally, the federal government spends very large amounts of money on research at various universities and corporations around the country. I think it might be interesting if you could tie some of that funding to good practices.

There is one very useful thing the federal government can do. We are currently asking self-regulating professional bodies to do something that is very difficult, very expensive, and, quite frankly, that runs contrary to their own economic self-interest. We should recognize this, and instead of simply trying to complain about it, maybe we should encourage it and support it.

• (1425)

What's going on right now right across the country is that there is a great deal of movement towards accrediting organizations. My organization has been accredited with the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children. I know of social service agencies that have accredited under ISO 9000, believe it or not.

Wouldn't it be interesting if we could have a national body that accredits professional licensing bodies and that says, "If you come up to certain standards of equity and justice in how you treat immigrants with their credentials, we'll give you some money". In the scheme of the federal budget, it needn't even be all that much money.

This would be really neat, because it would do a couple of things. It would recognize and compensate for the real burden and cost laid on these bodies. Such a program would probably avoid provincial sensitivities, because it would be totally voluntary. And you're using the federal spending power in an area of provincial jurisdiction that is being severely impacted by an area of federal jurisdiction. You could do it with an arm's-length body, with the board drawn from representatives of licensing bodies. Finally, I think it's just simple justice; if a professional body is saying that for standards of quality, individual professionals need to be licensed and assessed and accredited, shouldn't that same rule apply to that body itself? It seems to be a simple matter of fairness to me.

At the end of the day, we need to stop complaining and threatening and criticizing, and instead be encouraging and supporting. I think this might go a long way toward beginning to address the issue.

I submitted by e-mail two documents to this committee. I don't know if you got them. One was a set of the kinds of standards I would like to see bodies follow, in terms of working with offshore credentials, and the other one was essentially what I've just spoken to you about.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we're going to go to a round of questioning. We want to make sure we have good discussions going, but we want to be fairly brief so that we get a lot of interaction.

Let me start with Ms. Ablonczy. She's very keen on this particular issue.

Diane.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): It's my number one issue.

I am so appreciative of all of your presentations, because you actually set out alternatives or proposals to fix this. So often we hear a litany of how bad it is, but people have a pretty vague idea of what needs to be done to fix it. All of you have put forward very concrete and helpful proposals, which I really appreciate. I haven't even heard some of them before, so that's even better.

My question to all of you is about the following, that the real bottleneck in this whole process is the fact there are so darn many players. There's Immigration Canada; there's HRDC; there are the provinces, who have authority over labour relations; and then there are the unions and the professional and trade associations, some of whom, let's be honest, have too much of a closed-shop mentality. I'm not trying to be partisan here, as I think we're all pushing the government on this, and it isn't just a party issue, but the excuse I get when I push the government on this is that it's almost impossible to get all of these players to play.

My own belief is that it's going to take what I call the carrot-and-stick approach. It's going to take quite a few carrots, which means that the federal government is going to have to give some financial incentives and actually pay the freight for setting up, for example, the credentialing processes, and so forth; and some sticks, I guess, and maybe sparingly used, though sometimes there have to be some

negative consequences for people dragging their feet on being active players in this whole process.

So my question is the following. It's actually a two-part question. One, is this the bottleneck? We've been talking about this for years and years; ever since I've been a member of Parliament, and that's going on 12 years, this has been on the horizon, but hardly any progress has been made at all. So is this the real bottleneck, or is there another reason it's not happening? But if it is the bottleneck, can you suggest to the committee some concrete measures in addition to those you've already given us to try to get people to play nicely together on this issue?

•(1430)

The Chair: Mr. Dey.

Mr. Vinay Dey (As an Individual): Some of the points you have raised are right, but I wouldn't include the union because the union does not have the power to check the credentials of immigrant workers. Yes, associations are responsible—and this is a democratic society. You cannot ask the associations to follow some kind of rule unless you bring in a federal law on the rich. The association has to use the same yardstick for everybody.

For instance, for doctors, it is the medical association that has to be told they have to do that, but you cannot force them to do it unless you put this in the law. The worst part is that the same doctors, the same engineers, are working in the call centres in India. They're fine. They can do the work there, but as soon as they come to Canada, they are not qualified to work in Canada.

Mr. Rob Bray: I think the fundamental bottleneck here is not necessarily so much the complexity of the issue as it is the old Canadian problem of the federal-provincial jurisdictional overlap. The provinces, by and large, have demonstrated very little interest in this. And I'm sorry, but I think the federal government's ability to wield a stick on this issue is very limited. You have the ability to put some money into it, for sure, but I don't know how much you can do on the other end, except maybe take me up on my suggestion to fund a few new challenges.

I agree the situation in one sense is very complex. Doctors are a really good example, where you have to deal with teaching hospitals, faculties of medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Department of Health. They all basically have to be on the same team at the same time, and they never are, of course.

On the other hand, the problem is actually quite simple. The problem I was trying to identify was the kind of practice you see by professional bodies. I think there's a really good analogy. We just set up the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants, because even though it is very complex, the fundamental problem is the behaviour of people doing that kind of work. So could we not set up something analogous and look at the kinds of behaviour of the people doing the things we don't like in the royal colleges, the professional engineering associations, and the trades apprenticeship boards? We should look at all of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Burgener.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: There are a couple of things that I think might be of interest. The federal-provincial issue is definitely a concern. If you take the construction industry, whether it's architects or engineers, it's a large country; they're going to indicate there are differences in construction requirements in B.C. compared to Newfoundland. So that's the scope of the issue there. But having said that, organizations that have to continue to get re-accredited professionally from province to province as they try to work are looking for some shared standards, because it's expensive and onerous to be accredited in ten different places.

The fact is that you can go to the United States and do business in your profession and get across those jurisdictions. If you're accredited in Alberta, have a green card, and want to work professionally in the States, there seems to be some ability. So it may be a question of looking at what they have agreed to between the United States and Canada to allow professionals to go north and south.

On the carrot that can be looked at, there's the 2010 Olympics and the shortage of construction workers we're going to have to build those facilities. There may be some opportunity there. I know you have recommended no more pilot projects, but you're going to be spending money there. Maybe there's a way to allow skilled workers to perform and do the business they will need in B.C.

That's something to target, but I suggest you put most of your effort into the universities that train these professionals, so they have a sense of what the implications are in working nationally. People come out of university with the sense that they can only function and practise in certain areas. I think there's a real old boy's club there, and if you have an opportunity to look at the post-secondary institutions and have some sway, there might be an opportunity to break some of that log-jam.

• (1435)

The Chair: Thank you, very much.

Mr. Clavet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I much appreciate the opportunity given me here to put some questions to you. I would have many questions for several people here, but my first ones are for Mr. Bray.

Mr. Bray, I would like to begin by congratulating you for defining what must not be done. This will help us to not repeat the same mistakes. But I would like to dwell here on what you have suggested that we do. You would propose that we offer financial assistance for legal challenges. This is an interesting tac. It is somewhat like the legal challenge programs that exist for linguistic minorities and which are funded by the federal government. If we do this for linguistic minorities, then we could also do it for new immigrants. However, I wonder if that would not make the process even more cumbersome with the addition of more lawyers in the area of immigration, where there are already a good many. Is that a danger or this solution really worthwhile?

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Bray: I think it's not the best solution, but I also think the behaviour of some bodies, who I do not care to name right now, is such that it may be the only solution.

I think if it happens to one professional association that gets hit with a lawsuit.... For example, the doctor. Given the rates of pay a doctor makes, if you have a doctor who's been prevented from practising for 10 years, that's a lot of money he's lost. Furthermore, if he hasn't practised for 10 years, his skills have decayed to the point where he's never going to practise. So you have a whole earning career that this guy could sue for.

I think once a professional body gets hit with a million-dollar lawsuit and loses, a lot of the other professional bodies may start paying some attention. And every lawyer I've sat down and discussed this with has been pretty unanimous that they were very sure cases like this would go forward.

The problem I've had trying to get it to happen on my own is this. Any immigrant who starts making those kinds of noises usually gets offered a job by a medical association or a pilot project.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: I would have a supplementary question, this one for Ms. Burgener, from the Chamber of Commerce of Calgary.

I was surprised to hear that there is a shortage of truckers here in Calgary. At the same time, you say that there is a list of 700 new immigrants who are waiting for workplace preparation courses. There is therefore a double problem. Not only do you have a shortage of skilled workers but at the same time there is a waiting list for transition into employment. You therefore have two problems. It is not easy. How can the federal government help you?

[*English*]

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: It's interesting you raise the trucking question. One of the fallouts of the BSE crisis that we've endured here in Alberta is that as we are preparing to open the border, a lot of our truckers who require specialized training to transport animals, certain age requirements, and licences have had to move on to other forms of work. As a result, as we move nearer to getting the border closed just prior to this recent injunction out of Montana, while scrambling for that issue to be dealt with, we are partnering with some aboriginal communities to look at specified training in that area. So we are looking at solutions to that one.

With respect to ESL, it's always a problem to provide the training and language skills that are necessary, because only certain positions are funded and there's only so much capacity. I believe that given that the language and workplace language skills are one of the essential components, any resourcing that is available should be targeted to those areas where certainly the dollars can be most effectively spent. I think when you have those kinds of waiting lists and they do need that workplace training, a good place to start is with the dollars.

Mr. Roger Clavet: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to everyone for your presentations. We're having a good day here in Calgary with some really very helpful presentations.

I want to ask Ms. High a question.

The program you describe sounded really great: the online training with Athabasca University, the national standards that have been developed. Is your profession having fewer problems with provincial-federal jurisdictional disputes than others, or did you just not have the time to go into those kinds of problems?

• (1440)

Ms. Sandy High: Over the past 12 years we have been trying to work with many of the provincial associations, actually at a more national level, because we wanted to have a national program that was voluntary.

CECAB is based on a discipline-plus format, so you have your degree or your diploma, plus the idea is that you would belong to a provincial profession. So you would have both a provincial credential as well as having that CCEP, because you require more experience and knowledge in dealing with the environment.

Yes, we have had issues at the various levels. We've had issues especially in areas that are in, let's say, B.C., Alberta, Ontario, where they're looking at restricting the number of people who will be able to sign off on remediation around reclamation certificates. So those are definitely issues that we are trying to deal with.

We're trying to work with the public service to indicate, from their point of view, that a CCEP would be preferred on any types of environmental work that are being put through MERX. It's a system the government has paid for, so it's a certification, and why not use it? Maybe the idea is that we're trying to use a poll system, where once employers realize that they should have these types of credentials nationally, then maybe the provincial credentials won't be as effective or required.

Mr. Bill Siksay: When do you expect the Athabasca University program to be up and running?

Ms. Sandy High: We're hoping it will be up and running by about June or July.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Ms. Burgener, I wonder if you could tell us a little more about the Talent Pool project.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: Basically it's a jurisdiction that we formed at the Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the federal government and the province. We have funding from Canadian Heritage of, I think, \$47,000, and from the Alberta human resources and employment department to the tune of \$75,000. Obviously those skill shortages that we mentioned earlier are important, but the underemployment issue is important too. The elderly, aboriginal, youth, etc., require some attention.

We have worked to create some pilot projects in the federal government's initiative with Africa. At the Chamber of Commerce we've had a business centre that has been manned by an African immigrant who is looking for experience in the workforce and who is using that kind of resourcing to give them the experience they need.

We also partner quite heavily with our five post-secondary institutions in Calgary and participate in a number of conferences to use best practices to provide businesses with an understanding of what it takes to reach an aboriginal community for employment opportunities, some of the skill sets the elderly have, how to approach an employee, or how to provide a system for recruiting and retaining them. So best practices is another element.

I do have one of our brochures I'd be happy to leave with the committee. Again, you can get more information from the website.

Mr. Bill Siksay: How's my time?

The Chair: You have more.

Mr. Bill Siksay: A minute or two?

Mr. Rasheed, you mentioned the Labour Force Development Board and how that had been abandoned. Was that system working better than the current system? Could you reflect on that a bit for us?

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I think if we had a national board—this question goes back to Diane's—then that national board could set a standard. Every processing body has its own regulations. I think at AEDA in Alberta they have a TOEFL English language department with a 600 score. You have to have 600 marks just to get in to write a final exam. In Ontario they have less than that. There's no national standard.

To get a 600 score I think you must be a university professor. Even Canadian-born people whose mother tongue is English have a hard time getting a 600 score in total for the exam. If we had a board like we used to have, then that board at least—Hedy Fry has \$68 million, and some of that money could go to setting up national standards. I think Mr. Rob Bray made that point for it strongly. Even though the federal government, the provincial government, and the assessment body are not talking with each other, with a national board, maybe they could work with each other. In not recognizing our education, our qualifications, and our experience, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Conference Board of Canada, this represents a loss to the Canadian economy of almost \$6 billion.

• (1445)

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Temelkovski, go ahead, please.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Jocelyn, you mentioned in terms of ESL help that there isn't enough space. Can you tell me how the funding works, so I can understand it?

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: From a Talent Pool perspective, we're advocating for the funding for ESL programs. In the different institutions, whether it's Bow Valley College, which is a publicly funded institution, or private colleges, my understanding is that they apply for funding on a per student basis, and depending on the allocation of resources, that's how those dollars are allocated.

I see Rob raising his hand. Maybe I should defer to my colleague.

Mr. Rob Bray: Funding in Alberta for the ESL is pretty much entirely paid for federally. The provincial government does not contribute much to it. It contributes much more to employment and training projects.

Across the country funding is allocated under something called a settlement allocation model. Eighty per cent of this money goes to language instruction and 20% goes to settlement services. Each province is given an allocation based very roughly on the number of immigrants that land in that province each year. But there are various adjustments to that for the number of refugees versus the number of skills and whether you're a big centre or a small centre. Currently Alberta receives about \$800 per immigrant.

The bigger problem we have here, specifically in Alberta, is that for every immigrant who lands here another one transfers in, and there's no funding for that. Consequently, the waiting list for ESL in Calgary right now is running eight to nine months. A lot get discouraged and don't even apply. If everybody who was entitled to it and needed it applied for it, the waiting list would be a good deal longer than that. Something CIC has repeatedly said they will try to take into account is the transfer question, but they never really have.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: And the level of language, is it basic? I know when I came to Canada I didn't speak two words of English.

Or is it adequate enough to fulfill some credentialing body's requirements, or...?

Mr. Rob Bray: No, it is not.

In Calgary, language instruction is generally only available up to the Canadian benchmark level 5. That is very far from fluency, and certainly nowhere near what's needed for most professions. After that, you have to take fee-based ESL, which is not cheap.

Mr. Vinay Dey: The main point is that ESL is not based on professional degrees and things. Take, for instance, a doctor; he needs a different kind of ESL. An engineer needs a different kind of ESL. But it is not that way. You are literally giving them English that is not going to help them in their day-to-day lives. They need to have ESL training for particular professions.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: It's workplace-specific language training they're looking for.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So a doctor coming in would be assessed for language skills to enter into a credentialing system. I'm assuming it wouldn't be by a CIC employee, but they would be assessed by....

Mr. Rob Bray: I don't think we want to go there; it gets very, very complicated very, very fast. Generally speaking, the—

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: That's why we're here: we want to get there.

Mr. Rob Bray: Well, the case of doctors is probably not the best case, because it is the most complicated.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Other professions.

Mr. Rob Bray: Generally, for example, if you're a nurse you have to present the TOEFL test score at a certain level. If you're an engineer... I don't know if you have to present the TOEFL for engineering.

So it's up to each particular body what they require.

• (1450)

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So is that \$800 transferable to TOEFL for engineering?

Mr. Rob Bray: No.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So these people, I'm assuming, are going to attend the ESL class anyway?

Mr. Rob Bray: Yes.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So the \$800 is paid there, but it's not—

Mr. Rob Bray: The \$800 is the rough amount that comes into Alberta, which is then allocated by CIC to various ESL providers. We're one, and Bow Valley College is another. They purchase a certain number of hours of instruction from us, and individual immigrants are entitled to a certain number of hours of instruction, which they get. I'm sorry, but I don't have the exact number. Once they've consumed those hours, no matter what level they're at, that's it; any further ESL they have to pay for out of their own pocket.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Mr. Rasheed, did you have one more comment?

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: ESL gives you enough English to buy groceries, if you have money. But for money, you need a job, and for a job, you need enhanced English language training, which we don't have.

Currently, this is a highly prized document. All of you probably have access to it.

There's \$20 million per year in ongoing funding for ELT or enhanced language training for professionals and engineers. Then you need to have money, then ESL, and then you can go and buy groceries.

I think this \$20 million is not enough.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: It's not adequate.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Nina.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you for your presentations.

At times, I think when you meet with new immigrants they say it is quite frustrating when they come here on the point system. When they apply in their homeland, their degrees are recognized, and once they come here they're not. Then they have to do all sorts of small jobs.

So in your opinion, what needs to be done so that we can all overcome these barriers and make our new immigrants' lives easier?

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: Your question is very well stated. I think the strain of the immigration system is that people arrive here in Canada thinking they're going to be employed and then find that they can't be employed in their profession of choice, which strains their family relationships. It basically deteriorates and goes downhill from there.

I think there's an opportunity to pre-qualify and pre-clear prior to leaving their country of origin where possible. I think with the Internet and websites there are some opportunities that should be made available there. I think it's not just about being able to arrive in Canada, but it's about being able to understand what you will be able to work at.

I think under resettlement there's a lot of understanding about learning the language and the culture, and I think families or individuals can make those decisions and be prepared for some type of upheaval. But I don't think the potential of loss of stature, from the inability to work in a profession in which they're trained, is as well understood.

I know steps are being taken to make that clearer, but I do believe that if the federal government wanted to influence the country of origin in some way, through the web and communications, to better identify those issues, it might be a good first start.

Mr. Vinay Dey: Unless all the stakeholders are sitting in one place, nothing can be done. Over the last 20 years I must have attended eight to 10 conferences on PLAR, from Halifax to Vancouver to Montreal—everywhere. Nothing can be done. All the stakeholders have to be on board. The thing is, some backroom arm twisting is required, because that's how it works.

I will give you an example from Alberta. There are 168 doctors who passed their medical board exams, out of which they took only four. So those 160 have to appear for an exam again. Now, after pressure from the people, they have raised it to 48 this year. Just like Ontario. Ontario has registered a number of doctors again.

Every province, every city, has some kind of pilot project that is working, but there is no national project. Ottawa has a project where teachers are being trained at Queen's University and given certification by the board of education in Ottawa. Why is this not being followed in Alberta?

A central body, like CLFDP, which used to be there, can help to bring all the stakeholders together in front of the federal government.

• (1455)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: Getting back to that point, I think there is a role for the federal government at this stage because we are losing a lot of talent and a lot of productivity and efficiency all across Canada. Most of those people, even if they have English as a second language, actually need very minimal requirements. Actually, they are doing the work, but the certifying body does not recognize their qualifications. A lot of engineers I know in Calgary are doing the job as engineers, but someone else is following them around to stamp their work.

I think the federal government has a very strong role to play to get... I think I showed in my presentation that there are 340,000 people, professional people, from doctor to plumber. And I think I mentioned—someone asked a question earlier—that the average plumber's age in Alberta right now is 52. We will be having a huge shortage of tradespeople. I think it was mentioned by a lady earlier that the construction industry is growing. You know that right now

people are paying through the nose to get qualified people at their offices or plants or wherever they're needed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rob Bray.

Mr. Rob Bray: Thank you.

One of the things that I think destroys the morale more than anything else is that there's this fairly large amount of misrepresentation going on. Licensing bodies don't really want to come out and say, "Sorry, we don't want to license immigrants". They're not going to come out and say they don't think Indian training is any good, or they say their system doesn't work very well but they're about to reform it next year. They want to appear to be doing their jobs even though they're not.

Consequently, the poor immigrants, hearing this, think there really is a chance and are misled into wasting years of their lives investing in a desperate attempt to play a fixed game, which they're not going to win. I really would like to see a lot more truth and clarity out there.

I briefly had a project in Manitoba where I wrote the manual for each occupation and what you had to go through to get a credit, and boy, did I get hot phone calls from those associations, because I was telling the truth.

The government put one out. The government was too sensitive and didn't quite tell the truth, and it became a useless document. I would love to see more truth out there.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think that's a very good place to start—the issue of truth and clarity. That seems to me to be the key. If people overseas are not being given the accurate information, truth and clarity about the situation in Canada, clearly we'll have some extremely unhappy and disappointed people.

You mentioned a government document that you did not believe was accurate. I'm not sure exactly which government it might have been that put out that document. I guess I'm a government member, but we do nothing but suffer when there is less than truth and clarity on the part of people overseas who give information on behalf of the Government of Canada. So we certainly are more zealous than anyone in wanting to make sure they get accurate information.

I would like to follow that up. Perhaps you could give me more indication later about the particular document and the particular country.

But more generally, why is it that immigrants are misled before they come to Canada? Is it because professional people overseas who are potential immigrants to Canada rely heavily on immigration consultants, who are not people who provide truth and clarity, to use your words? Is it because the government offices say they provide them with basic information, but they have to interpret it, and the government doesn't get into the business of really telling them what it is in the province of Alberta or British Columbia or wherever?

I'm a little puzzled as to where this problem lies. And let me quickly say that we as a panel have twice had the medical people in front of us, most recently in Saskatchewan, where they pointed out that 50% of the doctors they represent are foreign trained. They are not hostile to foreign degrees. A member of this committee is an immigrant to Canada, a doctor who got a degree abroad, Dr. Hedy Fry. I have another colleague from the B.C. caucus who similarly is foreign trained and an immigrant to Canada.

I'm just not quite sure where the problem is. I've heard a lot of people talk about it, but I'm not quite sure where the problem is, and until we find that out and really zero in, we'll probably be correcting the wrong problem and creating yet further difficulties and further misunderstandings down the road.

Is it because people overseas who are professionals unfortunately turn to immigration consultants, other professionals whom we have absolutely no way of disciplining if they misrepresent the facts about Canada to these potential immigrants?

• (1500)

Mr. Rob Bray: Before I address that particular point, to go back to your "foreign-trained friendly" medical association in Saskatchewan, you do need to understand that there's not exactly clarity there. For foreign-trained doctors, if you graduate from South Africa or the United States, yes, it is fairly friendly. If you graduate from Germany or India, well, sorry, it isn't very friendly at all.

So there's some clarity right there for you.

To go back to what the problem overseas is, I think you need to start with the understanding, as I said in my presentation, that immigration is fundamentally a highly optimistic act. If you're going to move to another country, you want to believe it is going to be good. To a degree, you are going to fantasize and dream about it being good, so any information that feeds towards what you want to believe, you're going to listen to, and information that doesn't feed towards it, you may not hear.

The second part of the problem is not so much immigration consultants, it's Canadian government staff—locally hired staff who may not know very much about Canada and Canadians who may not have been in Canada in quite a while, who certainly have spent their lives in Citizenship and Immigration as bureaucrats, not out dealing with engineering jobs. So there really isn't that kind of information available.

Now certainly the consultants are another whole issue, and yes, you're absolutely right. They're not about to tell somebody that it's going to be bad news. That would put them out of pocket, right?

On the other hand, I'm amazed at how much information a lot of the immigrants I deal with do have. There's an awful lot of stuff out on the Internet now. You can get quite a bit of information. At my agency we get contacted all the time by people abroad asking specifically these kinds of questions.

I think the perception that very large numbers of immigrants are misinformed before they arrive is not accurate. I think there are some who are very misinformed, and boy, are they mad when they get here, yes. But I don't think it's a general problem that covers everybody.

Finally, as I said in my presentation, we have to recognize where the problem is, as you say. In my analysis the problem is with the licensing and accrediting bodies. It is not with the immigrant. We shouldn't be addressing our attention to better informing the immigrant. We should be addressing our attention to encouraging and coercing, or whatever, some better behaviour on the parts of those accrediting bodies.

The Chair: Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: There is a shortage of doctors in Canada. We also have a shortage of engineers. There is a point system. If you are an engineer, you get so many points and this can bring you immigrant status. The misleading starts with the federal government and Immigration Canada. It will take you eight to ten years to become a doctor in Alberta. We mentioned 192 who had passed the Canadian Medical Association exam. Of these, 48 were given jobs this year. They can become doctors, but it takes eight to 10 years. The doctor who has already spent 15 years of his life to get a medical degree comes to Canada and finds that it will take him another 10 years to qualify as a doctor.

This misunderstanding originates from the federal government. In the foreign missions, they say there's a shortage of doctors, engineers, even nurses. The assessing body is making it very difficult right now. It's difficult to become a nurse if you are trained in India, Pakistan, or a third-world country.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: The workplace experience is a concern as well. You might arrive here with credentials, but then you need to have Canadian experience, which may be difficult to get. You've not worked in Canada, and you don't have the language skills. You can't get the job to get the experience, and then you find yourself in that vicious cycle. So the workplace component should be given some consideration as well.

• (1505)

Hon. David Anderson: Who gave these assurances that there would be employment? Where is the misinformation? The point system doesn't strike me as being misinformation. It tells you that you get points for entry, but it doesn't say that if you get so many points you automatically get a job. I'm not sure where the problem lies. Certainly, Rob believes it lies with the regulatory bodies. Yet the regulatory bodies were perfectly candid with us about the number of people from South Africa and the United States, and the difficulty of assessing 200 medical schools in India, some of which they said flatly were just as good as anything in Canada.

So this is my difficulty in getting my mind around the problem. Is it an information problem? Is it the optimism problem? Is it relatives writing back glowing accounts of the salaries of doctors in Canada?

Mr. Rob Bray: All of the above.

The Chair: Mr. Parvez.

Dr. Masood Parvez (President, Pakistan Canada Association of Calgary): The problem is multi-faceted. In Pakistan, for example, doctors make a good salary. So do engineers. But there are conditions in the country that are not very favourable. You may have heard the case of a doctor being raped. People often want to emigrate. They want to settle where there's peace, where they can live better lives. The consultants tell them Canada is heaven on earth. They want to come here. They have money, and they sell their assets and move here. They think that as soon as they get here they will have better opportunities. Then they struggle for years to pass the local exams, and they're qualified to work. The government should take some stern action on this. They might send them to areas where they are most needed for a number of years, after which they would be free to move wherever they wanted.

This is a game that has to be played on all sides, by all the players.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I'm answering the Honourable David Anderson's question.

The foreign system is a fair system—I'm not saying it's not—but if you give someone hope that they can get so many points with their degree and they are told there is a shortage of engineers as well.... So you can see who's misleading there. Even if those people have really good jobs, like doctors in Pakistan or India where they are making a lot of money, when they see that a doctor over here can make a half million or a million, they sell their practices and move to Canada.

I think the question earlier was about the trouble in Calgary. They say the way it works in the health care system, with a lot of waiting lists, is if you want to have your baby delivered with good care, you'd better call a cab driver. He can do a better job than a doctor in emergency. You have to wait three or four hours there. When you're travelling in a cab from home to the hospital and then you wait there...that cab driver is a doctor.

I don't know if you have taken a taxi from the airport to this hotel, but if you talk to the drivers, almost 50% are doctors or PhDs. Their talents are being underutilized. I think they were given kind of false hope. They have no problem, if they're engineers or doctors, and they are told there are no jobs...they have certain training before they come to Canada. That will help them...at least the torment or torture they go through when they're here driving cabs.

Actually it happened; I am not joking. A cab driver who was a doctor delivered a baby.

•(1510)

The Chair: Mr. Bray.

Mr. Rob Bray: You might find this interesting right now. Four of the largest immigrant-serving agencies in Canada, in Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, and Toronto, are talking about—we haven't quite said if we can do it yet or not—setting up a project to send our staff to Shanghai and Beijing and offer pre-departure workshops on orientation and settlement in Canada. We think we can do this on a user-fee basis, and we certainly know we can do a better job than the Canadian mission there.

The Chair: I think the point you raised is very important. An engineer from Pakistan came to my office, and he was not a happy camper. He gave up a job in Pakistan as an engineer. He had domestic help there. He showed up in Canada and couldn't practise in his profession. He sold everything to come here. It put him in a terrible position, and he was rightfully angry.

We have a problem. Even though we've started licensing consultants, there are always scam artists who operate. Ultimately, we're not going to be able to stop that. We're setting up an online portal where Immigration Canada is going to hopefully have much better information. I expect it will happen. I think they're spending \$20 million a year for the next five years. If it's well done, given this high-tech age, I expect people are going to make more use of it, particularly people who are coming from those kinds of professions.

I find that we're dealing with a totally different kind of immigration now. People are coming who have degrees, and they're given recognition for that. That's what gets them into the country. When they all of a sudden find out they came here under false pretences, we have a real problem. That's something we have to somehow do better.

With the doctors, all I know is that every time you graduate a doctor it costs the health ministry \$300,000 to \$500,000 a year. Perhaps that's where the problem is—not licensing them fast enough. The governments don't want to pay the money.

Mr. Rob Bray: Oh, boy. The big issue that really complicated things for doctors happened back in the eighties. The ministers of health met and decided that the problem with escalating medical costs was there were too many doctors. That leads me to conclude that the ministers either thought doctors made people sick, or that doctors were practising fraud, because if you add more doctors you get more billings, and there was obviously unnecessary work going on. You limit that fraud by limiting the number of practitioners; you don't try to enforce.

I've got a real problem with that. Particularly in this country where our doctors are paid on a fee-for-service basis, if you add extra doctors and the costs go up that means there were unmet needs, not anything else. I'm sorry, I take that quite strongly.

Your other point was on the portal. There are other portals out there too, and I hope that works.

Anyway, that's what I wanted to say.

Ms. Jocelyn Burgener: If I could augment your comment, I think one of the components in any accreditation is allowing professionals to work to the full scope of their profession. I know that in my work in the legislature in Alberta, when we were looking at accreditation issues, the difficulty was with licensed practical nurses and RNs. They're trained to a certain scope of practice, but they're only allowed to practice within a certain range, and that's because doctors want to do all of this and the RNs want to do all of that. There is a little territorial thing going on there. An example would be that doctors were not interested in working in the far north but were prepared to let the nurses act as doctors in the far north. If they were in Calgary, there was no way; they had to be medical doctors in order to perform that scope of service. When we asked why, they said they need supervision.

I think if you're going to look at accreditation issues, scope of practice—allowing people to function to the full scope of their training—is another way to address it. It's a little tangential to your issue, but if you're going to do accreditation, you might as well take it to both ends of the spectrum.

Thank you.

• (1515)

The Chair: Thank you.

That's a very good point. Certainly health care reform is needed to be able to recognize all the professionals that are in the system and not allow specific guardianship for any one of the professions.

Mrs. Ablonczy.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Thank you.

I have two questions. One, it seems to me that in addition to there being some pushing on this issue at the political level, it may be helpful if there were some pressure applied to the various players from the bottom up—from immigrant groups, from immigrant service groups—to create a demand such that the pressure builds both from the top and the bottom. I wonder if you would comment on that.

The second thing is that there has been a suggestion—I'm not very happy with it—that when a skilled immigrant with credentials is accepted into Canada, the body, the profession, or trade that's going to accept that person would be required or be asked to give that person an individual assessment so that individual knows directly from the trade or profession what the state of recognition of his or her credentials are and what they have to do to bring them up to recognition in Canada. I'm not really happy with it because I can see a lot of bureaucracy and delays, but it was put forward pretty vigorously, especially if there was some federal funding to grease the wheels for that kind of process. I'd be very interested in your expert advice on whether that would be a practical measure.

So there are the two questions, the bottom up and the pre-assessment of credentials.

Mr. Vinay Dey: What you are asking is whether the doctors' credentials should be checked before they come in. Most of the doctors go through the same process after coming in. It is the doctors' domain. You are going into their domain and they don't want to give their domain away. So it wouldn't make any difference. One thing it will do is stop the doctor from coming, right at the border. The report given by the association about the doctor will tell that doctor, you are not good to come here. That will do it. But it won't solve the problem because they will still be thinking that if they cannot get into.... In which province are you going to do this? Are you going to do it in Alberta or Ontario? Everybody has a different set of rules. Naturally they'll say, "If I'm not successful in Alberta, I might be successful in Ontario, or I might be good in Halifax".

Unless you have a standards association or body with a standard set of rules, it's not going to work, because in each province they will say different things to the same individual.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I think on your first question of political pressure, if you look in your brochure you have about 32 organizations and we have three more, so there are about 35 or 36

national organizations. I think there are 35 out there for this presentation as well. This paper I gave you is also the outcome of this national consultation process.

We do have political pressure. Also, in Alberta you have seen the doctors... two years ago there were four, then 12, then 16, then 25, and now there are 48, and that's also through political pressure. There's a shortage of doctors, a long list of doctors, and there are 100 or 200 doctors sitting while they pass their national exam. So that political pressure is already there.

I go back again to national standards. If you fix national standards all across Canada, it will make it a lot easier for professional people to get into their own profession because the assessment bodies have their own rules in every province, and they make it very hard to get into a profession. They are like a watchman sitting at the door.

• (1520)

Mr. Rob Bray: In terms of the pre-assessment idea, I think it simply won't work. You'd have to figure out, as I said, which jurisdiction. Somebody else has to decide which occupations this would apply to and which ones it wouldn't apply to.

A really good example is engineering. You can do the work of an engineer without any professional affiliation at all; you can't call yourself a professional engineer, but you can certainly do the work. In Manitoba, for a while there, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists was very aggressively promoting the idea that immigrant engineers should accredit with them; they were charging between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per, and they were making a nice little chunk of money that was basically funding the rest of the association's activities.

If you're going to start making mandatory pre-accreditation, the incentive is then going to be to turn this into a revenue stream for those bodies that are doing it. I really don't think that's where we need to go.

On the pressure end of things, we have these gentlemen here, and there is quite a bit. Every major Canadian city has one or more professional immigrant associations. They are talking to the associations all the time. We in the business are talking to associations all the time. Frankly, they don't really care much about our opinion; they care much more about yours.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Should we get out of this business of giving people points for specific professional education, for PhDs, and go back to a system, or establish a system, where you have to have a job waiting for you in Canada if you're coming with education or training, or you're coming because you have family in Canada, or because you're a refugee? If we've been talking for 20 years about solving this problem and haven't managed to do it, should we just get away from the entire problem by establishing a system where you have to come to a job, and if there's a job shortage in Canada, industry and government have to come up with a plan to bring those people in and put them to work immediately to address that particular skill shortage? Have we made the system unduly complicated and raised people's hopes in a way that we can't ultimately address?

Mr. Vinay Dey: Even within Canada, if you apply for a job in Toronto from here they will tell you, "You are in Calgary. Come to Toronto, we'll take a look, and then we'll give you a job." Think about the person who is in India and applying for a job from there to come here. No, it won't work.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: Getting back to Mr. Anderson's question.... For example, if you have a PhD, or you're an MD, and you meet the Canadian immigration requirements, they are accrediting you as equivalent to their own doctors. You have false hope there. That person does not know that when they come over here they have to spend a lot of time here to be the equivalent of a Canadian doctor. It's a little easier to get a PhD than to become a doctor. They can come here, go to university again, re-educate, and pass the exams again. Then all their previous degrees will support them when they pass the Canadian university exams. But for MDs it's tough, because their association is holding them down. There are a lot of tests they have to go through.

I think it's false hope. Maybe we can work around it. If people can see that they can get the points, but when they come to Canada there are hardships.... As was mentioned by the previous speaker, you won't have a job working as an MD for many years. I've worked in the hospital industry for the last 30 years. I met a husband and wife from Vietnam who were doctors, and they worked as housekeepers in the hospital. Their only hope, they said, was that at least they were close to their profession in working at a hospital.

Mr. Rob Bray: To answer your question, first of all, prior to 1993, the selection system did sort of what you're talking about. It was still CEIC at the time, and they would attempt to determine what occupations were in shortage and bring people in. Everybody knew it did not work. The government is really bad at doing that, and that's inherent in the nature of things.

The current point system was a significant improvement in that it says, okay, we can't really assess occupations, but if you have more education, chances are you will "do better". That has problems, but it's better than the previous model, and it does inherently induce people to think that because you're asking for all this education, it's obviously important, and they're going to get a job in their field. It's not helpful in that sense.

I do have another problem, however, that the highest demand for workers in Alberta right now, for example, is not for people with master's degrees; it's tradesmen. It's plumbers—just try to find a plumber around here—and carpenters and electricians. These are in

high demand. The point system doesn't deal with that very well, and I think we really should look at that.

Finally, to say, okay, forget this whole economic stream unless you have a job offer goes very much against my grain. What you're essentially doing at that point is saying, well, yes, the system is unjust and discriminatory and we can't fix it, so we're going to admit defeat and not bring any more people in. I'm sorry, I don't think I want to do business that way. I want to win this one.

● (1525)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you.

Ms. Sandy High: I know in our industry, because we are a highly technical industry, we have had situations where people such as hydrogeologists are in very short supply. We have had companies go out to other countries trying to find hydrogeologists, and in some cases they have promised them their jobs. When they get here, they've allocated no funds to transfer to get here, and we have actually had to write letters on behalf of these companies to say, yes, there are shortages of these people in this country, and yes, there are jobs. So in some respects, I don't think we should actually write off the whole concept, because in some situations it can be used quite feasibly.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): We want to thank all the presenters on this panel. It was very practical and we learned a lot. Thank you very much.

We'll take a few minutes' recess before the next session.

● (1527)

(Pause)

● (1537)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): We will reconvene. We look forward to this round of presentations, again, on the issue of recognition of credentials. And we have presenting in this session, Dr. Nallainayagam. We do appreciate you sharing your expertise with us again this afternoon on behalf of the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary. Also appearing will be Ms. Woo-Paw and Mr. Joshi to help answer questions.

Then with respect to the Nigerian-Canadian Association of Calgary, we have Mr. Jude Udedibia.

For the City of Calgary we have Alderman Ceci with us.

So we'll have a good cross-section of presentations. We appreciate you being here.

We'll start now with Mr. Udedibia. You have about five minutes, please.

Mr. Jude Udedibia (Nigerian-Canadian Association, As an Individual): Okay, thanks.

I think the best I'll bring to you is my personal experience in terms of my own story, in the sense that I've gone throughout the processes regarding recognition of international experience and foreign credentials. I went through assessment; I went through the university; and I also dealt with my professional association.

Currently, I'm the manager of human resources for the town of High River, so we also deal with that in terms of the availability of the talent we are looking for to staff positions. I'm also involved in the community in terms of assisting new immigrants to gain employment in a more timely way. I sit on the board of the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, which does settlement services. I'm also on the board of the Calgary Community Adult Learning Association, which funds programs on behalf of the provincial government, including ESL programs.

Most of the things I'll give you will be from my experience in Calgary, or the Alberta experience, but I think some of them will apply across the country. Based on my own experience, I know it's not an easy thing to leave your own country and move to another country, arrive there, and try to re-engage yourself professionally.

I think there is a principle that the Government of Canada must always strive to maintain: the goodwill that Canada enjoys around the world is based on the fact that people are treated fairly. People recognize and appreciate that. Part of what is going on with recognizing foreign experience and foreign credentials is eating away a little bit at that goodwill for new Canadians within Canada. That's something we must do something to stop from continuing to happen.

I've been in and out of fora where this has been the topic, and one of the main things that came out of these is that there are many stakeholders involved, and what is lacking today is a multi-stakeholder approach. The people who assess your documents or credentials are stakeholders; employers are stakeholders, and your professional associations are stakeholders, especially in the self-regulated and mandated professions. Many people have talked about the medical profession and things like that, but the other professions that practise human resources.... For you to get ahead in my profession here, you need to get a designation. It's not required by law, but if you're within the field, you need to do that.

However it is done, it is important that it be a multi-stakeholder approach for success. That's the thing that is lacking in the present arrangement.

The second point I want to speak to will be employer programs and incentives. About seven years ago, the Mennonite Centre contracted me to walk with them to see how we could engage the Calgary corporate community to respond favourably to the presence of the many professionals being served by that agency who were not breaking through within the Calgary market. Issues of credentials and foreign experience all play a part in this, but my own interpretation is that employers are still not comfortable, for whatever reason, engaging someone who is relatively recent in the country.

In some of the areas, as I understand now, there are positions where I can say no or yes to a resumé, but those are things that can be dealt with if they are brought to the table.

• (1540)

I'll give you one example. Working in human resources, I know people in my profession from when I arrived here from my own country of Nigeria who want a job in the field where I work now.

But as an HR professional, you also try to protect the employer from potential liability.

So we should focus employer programs in terms of both programs and incentives, because eventually in all of the other areas, whatever they do, it comes down to the employer. That's the person who's going to give you a job. You've got a certificate and it's assessed, or whatever, by them, and it comes down to that.

I've got less than a minute left, so I'll only speak to the other point, which is that I think there is a need—and this links to the multi-stakeholder approach—to mandate professions and professional associations and all stakeholders by having an immigrant employment mandate. If they are going to be licensed as an association, they will have to address how they will handle that situation. In most places, especially when it is the government doing this, there are so many stakeholders that sometimes it's only legislation, regulation, or a law that brings everybody together. If you're going to do this, you need to consult what the legislation says; then that will help.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you very much. That was a good personal view of the situation.

And now Alderman Ceci, please.

Mr. Joe Ceci (Alderman, Calgary City Council, City of Calgary): Thank you.

As MP Ablonczy says, my name is Joe Ceci. I'm an alderman in the City of Calgary, in southeast Calgary, probably the part of this city with the most cultural and racial diversity.

I did bring 25 of these submissions and I left them at the front desk as I arrived, so they're there for you.

I would like to begin my comments by outlining the context in which we are now having these discussions. Specifically, we have come to a time in our country when Canadians and their governments have recognized the importance of their municipalities to their quality of life. Everyone wants to live in a vibrant, safe, and prosperous municipality.

The federal government's new deal for cities has taken the initial steps to put into action what Canadians want for their cities. However, if the new deal for cities is truly to be a "new deal", then it must speak to more than just one issue, like transportation infrastructure.

For cities, the new deal must speak to and recognize the necessity of a real partnership between all three orders of government. Settlement services for immigrants and the recognition of foreign credentials are clear examples of issues that require better cooperation and coordination between the federal, provincial, and local governments.

Alberta has been experiencing rapid economic growth for the past several years, and it is expected to continue leading the nation in growth for the foreseeable future.

Over 60% of all immigrants coming to Alberta settle in Calgary. Our immigrant population accounts for approximately 21% of our total population.

Like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, the City of Calgary also struggles to provide inclusive and effective services for our immigrants, with the limited authority and resources available to us as a municipal government.

The city's primary involvement with helping immigrants settle, integrate, and participate in Calgary is through the family and community and support services program, a funding partnership between the province and the city. FCSS currently funds one million dollars' worth of programs for serving immigrants in Calgary and it is administered by the city. These programs are bridging programs versus settlement programs.

The City of Calgary is also encouraging all funded agencies to work towards becoming culturally confident by critically examining their administrative and service structures and by implementing culturally sensitive service delivery models that welcome and respond effectively to all immigrants and their ethnoculturally diverse clients.

Although the federal government has increased the funding for settlement and immigrant integration services in the 2005-06 budget, Calgary's local programs still do not receive adequate federal funding.

We are recommending that the federal government adopt the recommendations made by the committee on citizenship and immigration in 2003 to increase the level of funding for settlement programs to reflect the increase in immigrant arrivals.

However, there's nothing better for successful integration of immigrants into Canadian society than employing immigrants in the fields for which they have been trained.

While many immigrants to Calgary are well educated, they are often unemployed or underemployed. Most immigrants are employed in positions that do not match their skill levels. The lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience contribute to this problem.

The City of Calgary is taking a leadership role this year through the creation of a pilot immigrant internship project. The project will invest in skills development and improve integration of newcomers to increase their opportunities to fully participate in the labour market. This would give some immigrants, for example, engineers, the professional experience they need in the Canadian workforce to challenge certification exams. At the same time we will be providing the city with a pool of talent that will be available to address skills and labour shortages, which we'll soon face.

At present, we are working to hire one intern for a period of four to six months, with plans to identify other appropriate intern opportunities within our corporation. If successful and sustainable, the project would ideally see the hiring of 10 interns each year across the corporation. Although the City of Calgary has taken on this role, it will not be sufficient to address the issue of foreign credential recognition in our city. We are projecting a 47% increase in the immigrant labour force in Calgary between 2001 and 2026.

It is clear that the integration of newcomers into our labour force and community with respect to diversity requires strategies that exceed the bounds of traditional economic development as well as the authority and resources of a municipal government.

● (1550)

However, since it is local governments and communities that face the challenges and opportunities of integrating immigrants into their communities successfully, it is time for municipal government to have a voice in immigration policy and decision-making.

Therefore, we are recommending that the federal government engage in meaningful dialogue with provincial and local governments, post-secondary institutions, businesses, and accrediting bodies to gain greater acceptance and recognition of foreign credentials.

The federal government's recent policy actions and interest in Canadian cities can provide the foundation for a framework if we are serious about creating a meaningful and productive partnership between the three orders of government. If properly implemented, the new deal for cities may lay the foundation for a more cooperative approach to governance and policy-making between all three orders of government and hence make certain that we can leverage the enormous potential immigrants bring to our country.

Once again, I'd like to thank the committee for making this stop in Calgary and for providing me and the City of Calgary the opportunity to share experiences with you.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you for your presentation. With the kind of weather we had today, I think the committee will never skip Calgary again.

Now, Mr. Nallainayagam, for the Ethno-Cultural Council.

Mr. V. Nallainayagam (Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary): I'm presenting on behalf of the Ethno-Cultural Council this morning. We are a voice for visible minorities in Calgary, a collective voice, and one of the mandates is to remove barriers for visible minorities for fuller participation in the economic, social, and political life of the city, the country. We believe this is a very crucial issue for visible minorities for fuller participation in the economic life of this country.

Our recommendations and our viewpoints are based on consultation we had with members of our council. We had a public consultation process, and based on that, we are going to give our view and make our recommendations.

Before I do that, I'd like to give some statistics. Of course, I'm sure you must all be aware of it, but it's worth repeating to see how grave a paradoxical situation we are in today in this country. Our immigration policy is now very much weighted towards skilled labour, business class rather than family class people.

In 1984 we had 44% of family class coming to Canada and 38% of skilled labour and business class. In 2001 the family class dropped to 27% and business class was 61%, so it's now very much in favour of skilled labour and business class. We are what we call cherry-picking in some sense, looking for skilled people in foreign countries to bring them over here.

Also, interestingly, new immigrants come with better qualifications than in the past. In the period 1956-1960, only 5.5% of immigrants came with a degree to this country; 89% came with high school training. In 2001, 34% of immigrants come to this country with a degree, and only 40% come with high school. We are now getting more skilled immigrants into the country. Paradoxically, they have performed very much lower...as compared to the former immigrants, their performance is not very good. Fifty-two percent of immigrants who came to this country after 1991 live in poverty in some of these situations.

We believe that one of the major factors contributing to this paradoxical situation is a lack of recognition for their training, qualifications, and experience in their home country.

So we are now going to look at some of the concerns expressed by our own members, and we'll look at some of the proposed recommendations as to how we can overcome some of these problems.

One of the concerns we raised was the non-recognition, as I've said, of foreign credentials. It results in unemployment and economic hardship. By the way, it's estimated that the output lost to the country in terms of GDP is \$6 billion from people not being employed. This is a direct cost to society. There's an indirect cost in terms of depression, treatment for illness, family violence—all these factors can add to the cost to society. I think we'd all be winners if the immigrants who came to the country could work in their own area, raise the productivity of the country, and enjoy quality of life, which we would like them to do.

The second issue is that we believe immigrants and overseas government authorities, that is our high commissions and embassies, have insufficient knowledge of the Canadian labour market. This results in misaligned expectations, expectations that are not realistic in the sense that they don't have all the information when they come here. The embassies are not well informed, up to date, in terms of labour market requirements in different professions. This is a shortcoming that we see causing this problem.

Another issue we face that we believe is contributing to the problem is a lack of universal procedures and consistent criteria in the assessment of foreign qualifications. We need to have fairly consistent and universal procedures and make them transparent. We would like to make a point—I think Dr. Joshi will speak on it later—that all the bodies that regulate professions must publicly declare what the requirements are for a particular engineer to come and work in this country, what is required for a doctor to work in this country. It must be transparent so that immigrants who come to this country will know if they fit into the category, if they'll be able to work in that area, without raising expectations, without having false hope.

We need them to commit themselves to declaring the criteria openly and saying, this is what we require, how many courses or how much training.

• (1555)

We have the following recommendations to make this situation better.

We would like to see immigrants given more support to expedite economic integration—specialized advice, career counselling, orientation sessions, ESL instruction, and financial assistance to people who pursue bridging programs. So we would like to see more funding for bridging programs and for training where it is required.

Secondly, we would like to see the government take action to educate employers about the benefits of hiring immigrant professionals, create new business opportunities, and offer job shadowing work placement.

It's an interesting issue now. We talk about work experience in Canada. It's a catch-22 situation. Immigrants who come to this country may have the qualifications, but they may not be able to work in their particular area because they don't have Canadian experience. But these Canadian companies use these immigrants in India and China to produce goods and services. They work in the software industry and in many other industries. If their experience in their country is good enough for these companies to trust them to prepare their software and all that, why can't they be employed when they come here? That experience is equally valuable in Canada as well, because these companies use them.

Also today, technology is so converging, with the Internet and all those things, that every country is adopting a universal standard in terms of technology and using similar labour standards. So their experience in a foreign country cannot be dismissed as totally useless, because they have the same experience that Canadians have.

We would like to see increased information dissemination in the foreign market about the Canadian system. We would like to emphasize also the need to streamline the operation of professional bodies. These include adoption of universal procedures and consistent criteria in assessment of foreign qualifications, transparency, and streamlined universal criteria.

Finally, we would also like to recommend the promotion of a multi-stakeholder partnership between public institutions, because there are so many bodies involved now—the federal government, the provincial government, universities, and regulatory bodies. We would like to bring them together and make sure they work in harmony, that there's coordination. We need to establish a body that can bring all these organizations together to ensure that immigrants who come to this country are well served in terms of their qualifications being assessed and recognized and their being given the option to work in the field of their own training and experience and also to enhance their quality of life.

Thank you for the opportunity.

• (1600)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you very much for those comments.

Now we'd like to seek your further advice. There are questions.

We'll start with Ms. Grewal.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all for your presentations.

As I have mentioned in the past, it is really sad to see engineers driving taxis and doctors pumping gas when their degrees are recognized in their homeland. They immigrated here on the point system, so why not here? They had a rosy picture in their mind that when they came to Canada their degrees would be recognized.

What needs to be done so that we can work on this?

Mr. Ramesh Joshi (Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary): I am a professor emeritus. I have a PhD in engineering. I have taught here at the University of Calgary, and I have worked in several countries: 11 years in the U.S.A., 22 at the University of Calgary, 11 in India, and a short while in Saudi Arabia. I have been to many countries, and I've lived in Japan.

These days, there is no reason for any association or professional organization to challenge a degree from anywhere. It's easy to assess. You go to the Internet, find out what courses are taught in a particular university, and you compare. In the Commonwealth countries, all technical and professional education—law, medicine, and engineering—is in English. There should never have been any challenging of degrees from Commonwealth countries. The communist education systems were also among the best. If communism did anything good, along with all the bad things, it was the education they provided their people. Those in the technical fields were quite highly educated.

So we should not challenge people just because of where they come from. These professional organizations accepted degrees from Australia, America, England, and white South Africa. So it was not the degree that was compared. Rather, it was the people. It was a discriminatory practice that still exists today.

In India and other countries there is a university accrediting commission. They don't allow a university to exist if it does not have the required infrastructure. There must be professors, laboratories, and other facilities before they will allow a university to function. In engineering colleges, they have to have all the kinds of things we have here before they are allowed to operate and award degrees. So all these degrees are actually the same. But only you guys can fix the problem. We can't do it.

Mr. Joe Ceci: The key lies with employers and professional associations. I'm a professional social worker. I feel obliged to help train other social workers and students.

There might be a way to bring more interns into the city of Calgary, people who have professional designations, perhaps as engineers, but no experience in Canada. We now have a pilot program in place, and we will see whether we can make it work. Other employers and professional associations might be able to work together on this. We are talking about a finite number of people. It's not millions. We're talking about 50,000 people a year or so. If they had a system of internship, mentorship, they could get on very well.

Ms. Teresa Woo-Paw (Chair, Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary): I think it would be helpful to look at the complete picture. I'd like to bring us back to look at the context, because the whole issue of foreign credentials is something that this country has

been looking at for the past 20 years. I believe especially people at the centres like Toronto have talked about this since the seventies and eighties.

I think the context is such that over the past 20 years the sources of immigration have changed drastically in this country. So I think a lot of people who are experiencing difficulty in having their credentials acknowledged are people of colour. They are visible minorities, and I think we need to take that into consideration.

So we have the changing and increasing labour force needs. We have changing demographics. Currently our institutions are probably not reflective of the communities we now have in a lot of the centres in Canada. I think we need to align our institutions to make sure that the people in those institutions really go through a process of reflection and look at how the practices and procedures could be potential barriers. We know they are barriers.

I think what the immigrant population and the minority population are looking for is some recognition that we need to address this. We all understand this is going to take time. We have learned from the medical doctors' initiative. When the provincial government changed the quota, they thought everything would be resolved. Then we realized the university could not respond to it.

So we have to wait for the university to resolve the issue, and then we can proceed further. So we understand it is a very complex process, but I think we also need to understand that we have to have some direction and incentive from the government to actually help these institutions to respond and not to sacrifice another generation.

Another issue we have very little control over is attitude. We are talking about issues of race, we are talking about giving people an opportunity, people who are very different from those who have the power to hire and promote, and those issues we have no control over. We don't need employers to love people who are different, but we want employers to give them jobs.

Thank you.

• (1605)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you very much.

I should inform our presenters today that Mr. Clavet was called back to Ottawa and had to leave to catch a plane. The chairman has been returning a number of media calls. So there's not any disinterest in these proceedings, but it's just juggling other responsibilities sometimes.

We have two other people wanting to comment.

We do have a little extra time, so if you'd be brief, maybe we'll have Mr. Udedibia first and then Mr. Nallainayagam again.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: I think the issue of recognizing international experience on foreign credentials is not new. On their own, all the different stakeholders have tried to do something individually, separately. If we focus today on professional associations, without the employers who will employ these people, without the immigrants having agencies that keep these people going until they are finally settled, without the provincial and federal governments that handle immigration, that single association....

I'll give an example. Everybody talks about the Medical Council. Last year they got \$341,000 to help them with assessment issues. How will this translate to employment for the next group of doctors who will come here in the next five years?

We use medicine as an example, but a regulated profession is one profession. There are hundreds of other professions. How do we as a country come up with something that is generic in terms of this example? A plumber is coming into this country. What does the plumbing industry, the person who teaches them, the person who hires them, have to do to make sure this individual, if he or she chooses, can get back to his or her profession quickly? I agree strongly in a multi-stakeholder approach.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you.

Mr. V. Nallainayagam: I wrote a column for the *Calgary Herald*, and the caption was quite interesting. It states—and it's not mine, it was the editor who wrote the caption—"What is that? You come to Canada and want a good job too?" It reflects some of the attitudes.

We believe employers are skeptical for perhaps good reasons. They think people are not well trained, the universities from which they came are not well developed, or the training they received is not suitable for Canada. I think there is great skepticism, because these new immigrants come from non-traditional countries like Asia, India, and China, whereas in the past employers were very familiar with people who came from England, Australia, or some of the European countries. That sense of fear and skepticism has to be addressed I think if we want to win this war of immigrants being employed by these companies, and ultimately the employment issue rests with the employers. The government can't do anything. They can pass their qualifications again. If the system is suitable for employment, ultimately employment has to be created by the employers.

That is the main issue we have to address, to give them sufficient information.

I think Dr. Joshi mentioned that in the U.S., if anybody comes in to practise in any profession, they have to write an examination to qualify to be certified to practise in that profession, irrespective of which country they come from. They could come from Canada, they could come from England, they could come from Australia, or from China or India; they all write the same examination to qualify there.

We should adopt this system—no discrimination. People coming from any part of the world to Canada should qualify in terms of this examination to be accepted as qualified to practise in this particular trade.

So if we can move towards universal standards, and transferring standards, and also to assure employers that these people have now passed this examination...irrespective of where they have come from, they are still suitable to work in our country.

This is something the committee may want to look at.

•(1610)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you.

Mr. Siksay.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for all of your presentations.

Mr. Nallainayagam talked in his presentation about Canadian experience and how that's often a barrier. Professor Joshi talked about the relative simplicity of judging the academic standards of other institutions, particularly in Commonwealth countries. Ms. Woo-Paw described the changing demographics, and almost said the word that I'm expecting to hear, which is "racism". It's something we hear related to all of the things you've mentioned, but it's something we really haven't said around the table. Ms. Woo-Paw came closest when she started talking about issues of race, but it seems to me that's what we're talking about in terms of people getting jobs ultimately with employers in terms of how our Canadian organizations look at the relative value of an education in other countries where folks are of a different race.

How do we get at this issue of racism? We talk about doing the credentialing process, and all of that, but it seems to me we're still not getting at the question of dealing with the racism that's found in Canadian society.

I know the government has put a bit more money towards that. I don't think we're back to what was cut back in the 1990s from programs on racism that the federal government offered. I think the former Conservative government was actually doing better than we're still doing at this point in devoting at least funding to addressing issues of racism in Canada. I'm wondering if on these particular issues you see a particular need for particular programs, and what they might look like, to address the issue of racism.

Mr. Ramesh Joshi: Thank you very much.

I think all of us want to say it, but we don't say it because many times when we say it, they say it's sour grapes.

Now we know our demographics are changing. We do need immigrants; our population is not increasing. And we are taking the immigrants who are highly educated. If we are taking them, how can we somehow avoid this? Probably, as was pointed out earlier, and as we discussed in the whole committee and in meetings, there should be some incentives to industry.

First, the professional organizations can be told by Parliament that the educational qualifications should be verified on the Internet. Why do you have to ask everybody to give his mark sheet? They go through this and are told, "You did not do this and you did not take this course".

I have taught engineers, and there are people downtown who say they would rather hire a foreign engineer than the engineers I am training. It's the honest truth. But still we do not hire them. This is clear discrimination.

How can we do it? Would you let us give the provincial government, city governments, some benefits? Give cities some grants. Give them another \$100,000 if they take foreign engineers. But education qualifications should not be one of the criteria they cannot decide before they immigrate. It should be decided right there when he or she is immigrating.

I'm coming to the medical doctors. Medical doctors, so far, have been saying there are no residency places. For family practitioners you don't need medical hospitals. You don't need any professors. You need only a medical practitioner. And there are so many medical practitioners. You can tell them, "Please, take this person. We will give you \$10,000 a year more if you train this guy. He already has the education. You simply have to train him to meet the qualifications you have."

It can be done. You can do it; we cannot do it. If you make this condition that anybody who comes is qualified, has passed all the examinations required, as is done in the U.S.... They pass an examination for foreign people. Once you have passed that examination, you are then taken in by any hospital or by any doctor or by any college and you are trained for another year or so and you become a doctor. It doesn't take 10 or 15 years.

It's the same for engineers. There are lots of jobs being done overseas: architectural drawings, structural engineering, X-ray reading. They are being done by Indian doctors, Indian engineers. Why is it difficult for us to recognize all those guys who are working there if they want to come here? Why can't we take them here and say they are good enough?

You can do it, madam, sir. We can simply cry and we can shout. You say from the bottom up they are doing it. We are doing our best. We can't somehow make people believe how good we are unless you tell them. Please compare and see.

Why was I hired? Because I was needed. I brought in a lot of money. I have graduated quite a few PhDs and masters'.... Initially when I came, they asked me where my registration was. I said, "Well, I'm teaching your people".

Let me digress. Any engineer who gets a degree here doesn't have to go through any other exam, except for the ethics one and one very easy exam. Any person who has a degree should be able to pass that exam. Otherwise, they get a professional designation after they work with an engineer. But when the foreigner comes, his degree is not good enough. He has to take eight more examinations in structural engineering and this and that.

It's the same with dentists. The poor dentist has to bring his patients to Vancouver so he or she can be tested. It's outright discrimination against that person who has a dentist's degree from England or elsewhere. They're not allowed to work here. So this can be done only by you, not by us.

• (1615)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): All right.

Ms. Woo-Paw.

Mr. Joe Ceci: I'll just venture an answer to this.

The sad reality is it's in society today, but there are many ways I think we can try to address it. At the City of Calgary we're putting all the preventive social service agencies we fund, which help with bridging programs for immigrants and new Canadians, through what we're calling culturally competent processes or practice.

We're trying to get at the systemic barriers those agencies have in place. Perhaps without their knowledge they've built a system that

works great for ethnoculturally diverse people from Europe, but it doesn't work so well for the rest of the society that utilizes them. We're trying to address those systemic barriers so we don't have individuals going into those situations and saying, "This is racist. I'm not getting the service I need and I need to go to the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission." That's one way we're trying to address it, by supporting people to become more culturally competent.

Ms. Teresa Woo-Paw: I'd just like to build on that. I think we all recognize that it is a systemic issue that requires a systemic solution and approach. I still believe the barriers newcomers face are by and large unintentional. We are talking about employers, so I think we need to talk to them, as social workers, in the language they understand.

We still have to believe that the approach is to talk to them about the benefit of having a diverse workforce. We also have to help people understand the regulations of the regulatory bodies. Employers also have to understand the benefits of having an organization that is congruent with what they do to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

So training is one aspect. But if we could actually help people understand the long-term benefits of the development of the organization, and really reap the benefits of a diverse workforce.... We need to help people understand that the governance, the board, and people at the government level are reflective.

We have to help people understand the benefits of developing a relationship with the community; help them look at things they may not see with a better homogenous pair of eyes, and really examine how they communicate. Are they communicating with 100% of the population, with 70% of the population?

Are we providing incentives to administrators to make sure they generate the kinds of results the organization wants to see? Are the people in human resources the right people, and are they providing support to the right people, and providing the right training? There are also the policy and procedures that create the organizational mores that will ensure that what they're working toward is inclusion and reflectiveness. I still believe the answer lies in education and helping people, with support, go through this process. It is for everybody's benefit that they have an organization that can truly respond to and retain people.

On Canadian experience, I believe in having people at the ground level sit down and come up with creative, innovative ideas. I think there's a lot of good work being done in Calgary right now, but we can be more creative.

I hate to beg for money here, and I'm not begging for ourselves—I do that every day in lots of the work I do—but I do believe the government needs to see support to these good programs as an investment. Even the support you provide to newcomers in terms of ESL is an investment.

When someone who has a doctor's degree is an attendant in a parking lot and making \$9,000, they're not paying a lot of tax. But if they could practise, they could be making a real contribution to society.

•(1620)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Good.

Mr. Jude Udedibia.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: Thank you.

In the multi-stakeholder approach that I'm proposing, unfortunately the time has come for the government to apply the stick method to the professional associations. My own belief, based on working with immigrants—I also come from a fairly well-educated immigrant community, the Nigerian-Canadian Association here in Calgary—is that the regulated professional associations are a stumbling block to the integration of immigrants within their professions. Part of it is historical, and I don't think it is tenable today.

If you use medical colleges, for example, if your medical training was received in England, the United States, Australia, France, or I think South Africa, you will have an easier time practising in Canada. The assumption behind that is that all the other training is inferior. It's only an assumption; it hasn't been proven. Some of them do eventually practise, but with the way our immigration is going, the people we attract are middle-aged—younger ones in their thirties, many in their forties, and others in their fifties and sixties. You're talking about people with anywhere between 10 to even 25 years of experience. So if you ask someone with 25 years of experience to come to Canada and spend another 10 years.... That's based on the professional associations, not the health regions that need them, the patients, or the Government of Canada. So that will be my approach, as a suggestion.

I also feel that the other side within that multi-stakeholder approach that hasn't been addressed very much is the employers themselves. I think they need incentives. Part of those incentives should include training. Coming from an HR perspective that I practise today, employers are worried about issues around human rights and sexual harassment. It creates liabilities for them. They say they're not sure, and they stay back. If there is assurance that this person is coming in, those cultural competencies...both ways. New immigrants come in and learn about how things work here, and at the employer level they need incentives to do that.

Thanks.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you very much.

Now Mr. Temelkovski.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Where do we start in getting all the stakeholders together? We're getting better-trained immigrants coming into Canada, as opposed to when I came to Canada. On the time it takes to enter into the right workforce, with the unemployment situation in Calgary I don't think people are having difficulty getting employment; it's getting the right employment. They're not working as engineers, but they're working as technicians at three-quarters of the pay. Are their credentials holding them back? Is it money that's the driving force?

Mr. Udedibia, you're an employer. What stops you from hiring somebody who doesn't have Canadian experience? You hire

engineers and social workers. Why would you shy away from the résumé of someone who doesn't have Canadian experience?

•(1625)

Mr. Jude Udedibia: The first reason would be English language competency. If that person in this part of the country doesn't speak fluent English, they will not be able to perform the duties of their role. Beyond that, personally, I do not see any other reason, unless it is a regulated profession. I'll give you an example. I worked here for six years before I got my credentials assessed, and the only reason I got them assessed was that I decided to apply to my own organization to get the practice designation. And they said, no, you must be assessed. My employer didn't ask for it.

So to answer your question, people who do not have the language competencies may not be hired, for the simple reason that communication will not work. If they do have that, speaking as someone who is coming at it from my own experience—I know I represent a minority point of view—the majority will not hire them because the resume shows them having an MSc from the University of Nigeria. It doesn't show an MSc from Lancaster University in England. It shows they have work experience of ten years in Nigeria and maybe five years in Saudi Arabia. It doesn't show work experience of five years in England, a year in Canada. Those will be the reasons.

It says something that many professionals, myself included, find it easier to get employment with government at the three different levels—municipal, provincial, and federal—more than in the private sector at our level of contribution. And the reason is that the cultural competency of government in terms of hiring is much, much higher than what we have in the private industry. That's where I say we are using the incentive as a gradual approach to get employers onside. It might mean bridging programs, it might mean internships, but if we keep targeting skilled immigrants, at a certain point it becomes unfair to ask someone who already has a first degree in a field to come back and do an internship for a year. You have a family to feed, and that internship job is not guaranteed.

So it links the issue of the historical acceptance of education and experience from Europe mostly, and of mostly English speakers from Europe, and not from the rest of the world.

Speaking about Calgary, most immigrants coming in the last few years, in terms of the largest numbers, have been from China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan. None of this is in Europe. And that's where we're getting the professionals.

•(1630)

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: I don't buy the premise that it's racially motivated, and I'll tell you why I don't. My personal doctor grew up here in Toronto with me. He went to become a doctor in Bulgaria. He came back; he was having problems. My personal dentist grew up with me here, went to Macedonia, became a dentist, and came back here. It took him six years to get his dental doctorate. This is nothing new. This happened when I came to Canada forty years ago, and it's happening again. The plight of the immigrant is not an easy task. It has gone on and it will continue to go on. We want to make it as fair as possible. We want to make it timely. We want to get rid of some of the roadblocks, if there are systematic roadblocks from our end, but it won't be velvet tomorrow, because that's just the way it is.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you.

Mr. Nallainayagam, go ahead, please.

Mr. V. Nallainayagam: Just to answer your question, certainly I agree with you that it does not apply to only immigrants from China or India. Maybe they come from Bulgaria or east Europe.

I think the fundamental reason is lack of knowledge about these countries, lack of understanding of these cultures. And employers are skeptical. Of course, they are looking at their profit. The bottom line is their main concern, whereas governments do not have the same preoccupation with the bottom line as the employers.

One of the excuses they give is concern over whether this person can do the work for them. It's a cultural issue. This person comes from a different culture; how will this person perform in a different cultural situation? Or when promotions come up, some of these visible minorities may not be given a promotion because of the popular argument about whether this person can manage a workforce of predominantly Caucasian workers.

These are the fundamental issues we are dealing with—attitudes. That is where we need to educate employers that the workers who come from different parts of the world carry with them the same type of knowledge and experience. I think eventually they will come to understand, when more and more of the workforce is diversified and they see more Chinese or Indian workers working well in their factories or in offices. They will be convinced there is no difference.

That is a battle I think we are now fighting, against this attitude and how to break through it, especially when the workforce is becoming more diversified.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I think, Lui, you talked about 40 years ago and today. But if you look at 40 years ago.... You are quite young, but a lot of people are older in this room and will remember that in the early 1970s—and I think Dr. Nallai will also support me—nurses, doctors, teachers would come from India, a Commonwealth country, and without going through any hardship would get into their profession.

I know nurses for sure, when they came in, whether they landed from the Philippines or Pakistan or India, were nurses right away provisionally; then they passed exams later on. They proved themselves in the system as well.

The same was true with teachers. I knew a teacher in my own.... I was in grade 10 in 1965-66, and our headmaster came to Canada and even had his way paid all the way through. He was a teacher in B.C. without going through any.... I think I said enough in my previous presentation.

But at that time the regulating bodies or assessing bodies did not have enough control. They were a little loose and a little relaxed. Later on, when they thought that people were coming from third world countries and were visible minorities as well, maybe that was not 100% true, but then they started screwing up the system. Instead of one watchman at the door they had 10 watchmen at the door, and they went through a lot of other changes. You had to have passed a TOEFL test. You had to go through a lot of testing. That is why a

doctor takes 10 years to become a doctor: because of all the testing he is getting into.

Mr. Udedibia said the federal government should use a stick, but I think that even with their money approach, if they can train people, and language and testing barriers can be removed and a lot of other stuff, and if new immigrants are given a chance—and there are 48 doctors this year in Canada—I think they will all be successful.

But I think regulatory bodies have more and more hold on regulating their own professions, and their own control is what they see they are losing.

• (1635)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): All right. We will go to Mr. Anderson.

Hon. David Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I must confess I'm a little bit surprised that Alberta is a province where we have heard so much criticism or negative comment about the regulated professions and the professional associations. It's a surprise to me, coming from British Columbia, that we would have heard this to the degree we have here, because the regulated professional bodies are pretty well, to the best of my knowledge, exclusively provincial. While it is attractive to suggest that the federal government should take a stick and stir them up, it is not a practical proposition in every case, and I'm not sure the provincial Government of Alberta, which has the regulatory responsibility, would approve. I only say this to suggest that it's not quick and easy to do.

Where you get into a question of attitudes of the regulated professional bodies here in Alberta, again I'm not sure that changing attitudes, if that is necessary, is going to be achieved by another federal-provincial battle over the accreditation bodies. So I am concerned that we have received so much comment that is so critical.

We've had before this committee representatives of the regulated engineering profession, nurses, doctors, dentists, and of course other professions as well, and we will certainly bear your remarks in mind when we go back to those professional organizations and speak to others—for example, teachers, architects, and there are plenty of others we've not yet spoken to.

I wonder if I could repeat a question I asked earlier today. I wonder whether this panel could look through the other end of the telescope for a moment and perhaps tell a non-Albertan some of the good things that are going on here, because I would hate to leave this province with only the impression we've had at these panels, which is highly negative. It's disappointing to hear, and I think there must be many examples...indeed I heard at lunch examples given of many successes in Alberta, which indeed would be models for other provinces of the country and the territories, and perhaps models around the world of success and vigorous cooperative efforts that are having positive results.

Let me put it out to you that I'm giving you the opportunity of leaving us with a positive message as well as the previous one you've given.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: Thank you.

Alberta is not as bad...I hope you don't leave with that impression alone. The only problem is sometimes it gets overwhelming when you see the potential of what can be done and for whatever reasons it is not being done.

Going to the positive, and Joe Ceci can naturally speak further to this, the City of Calgary started a local initiative with the Moving Forward with Diversity program, and we had success with that.

Do you want to speak to that, Joe?

Mr. Joe Ceci: I didn't plan that, but I can take it over.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: You drove that project.

Mr. Joe Ceci: Yes. Back in 1998 we gathered a lot of people together in this city—Teresa, and the doctor, and other people here at this table, including Jude—who believed that if you were a person of cultural and racial diversity in Calgary, Calgary might not be the best place to live for you; it was better for other folks. So around that premise we got a lot of people together and did a lot of good work: we tried to build awareness, we tried to build sensitivity, we tried to work across the sectors—the private, the public, the government. We had successes in trying to identify what needs to be done in the city in terms of addressing cultural and racial diversity and how to improve the range of people and cultures in different places, whether they be organizations or employers. We sat down and talked to many people, and I appreciate that.

I would not want you to leave Calgary either, Mr. MP, thinking that we're a city of just a bunch of whiners—I think that's Edmonton. We have many places to work. We have a creative workforce and many employers who are working throughout the world. They have excellent companies and businesses. I think they are the key to helping solve the underemployment of many new Canadians and immigrants of professional status, and if we can find some way of assisting those employers in turn to mentor, to job shadow where possible, then those new professional immigrants can get the Canadian experience they need to challenge the competency exams and actually get the designations they require to practice anywhere they want in this country.

•(1640)

Mr. Ramesh Joshi: Mr. Anderson, we are not complaining about Alberta or Albertans. In Manitoba, the director of one of the organizations in the Atomic Energy Commission was denied registration. He had a PhD, and he had been a professor in England. My student, who is now himself a PhD, is the head of one of the organizations. He said they were all aghast, but didn't know what to do. So everywhere it is there.

Maybe we westerners—when we come here we all call ourselves westerners—shout about the things we don't like. Maybe that's why the federal government gets sick of us. Why do we shout? We might look different in colour, but we are as western as any other Albertan. We learned it from the people who live here. We are in the neighbourhood.

We are asking you to level the playing field. We know that the provincial governments control these organizations, but maybe the federal government has a role. When the immigrants come, take their credentials. Otherwise you will lose the immigrants. These people, the younger people who are coming, will be frustrated. There are

quite a lot of people, not just those sitting around this table, but hundreds and thousands.

In the Toronto area there is an organization called CAPE. I have information from the Internet on what they have been doing for many years. They have not been allowed to enter the PEO, the Professional Engineers Organization, in Toronto. It's not only Alberta. It's happening all over the country. They have been fighting for many years, and nothing has happened.

So we are not complaining. We are saying it's a right. It's for the good of Canada. We have to compete in the world, to use all our labour force in the most productive way possible. It's a knowledge-based economy.

Look at America. There are now millionaires and billionaires from India who are in the industry. In Microsoft, 30% of the people are Indian. There are lots of Indians. They are welcome there. They are allowed to work. Nobody challenges them on that because they are from India. If you have a degree, you are accepted.

I had a professor from Oxford in my department. I couldn't understand him, but nobody told him his accent was poor. But my accent, because of my colour, is criticized. I go to a sales counter and the guy in front of me, who is white, is understood and accepted. I couldn't understand him. So this is a problem everywhere; it's not only here. The Poles and the Irish felt it. We are prepared to face it. We are simply asking you to make it equal for everybody: the Poles, the Irish, the Indians, and the Pakistanis. It can be done. Times have changed. We have to progress. We have to build a knowledge-based economy. Let's use the knowledge we have. Let's not let it go to waste.

•(1645)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Ms. Woo-Paw.

Ms. Teresa Woo-Paw: I think, first of all, there are lots of good things happening all the time across this country, including in Calgary, Alberta. The Diversity Calgary Leadership Council was one social movement experiment. Being a very business-oriented community, the fact that we had the Chamber of Commerce here to speak I think spoke very positively about the kinds of awareness, support, and concerns that Calgarians have around issues of these types of diversity.

On the Diversity Calgary Leadership Council, I was most impressed by the sincere support and their meeting every month for two years with people from Safeway, from the banking industry, from the oil industry, really trying to test these new models to address issues of diversity in a multi-sectoral way. We're still searching for ways to do it.

My husband is a geologist, so I know we don't celebrate or share these enough. They have people from China who they would love to hire, but they do have language difficulties. So they're willing to actually let them volunteer for a year and then let them try to work there, and then assess them and provide them support, and try to link them up with mentors. So we do have oil companies in Calgary that are trying different things in quiet ways to make this work on a daily basis.

Many of us like to think we are not British Columbia, we are not Vancouver, we're not Ontario or Montreal, but we have an opportunity to learn from the other centres. We have a great city, and we have an opportunity to do it right. So I think we do have that sense of optimism.

I was able to participate in a Canada 2017 discussion and the round table facilitated by Dr. Hedy Fry a little while ago. We were impressed by the developing framework for integrating foreign-trained Canadians and immigrants in Canada's labour market, partly because this framework had everything the council had recommended.

So we're most impressed and very optimistic, and I think, generally speaking, what this country has for all of us, including Albertans and Calgarians, is Canadian goodwill. Sometimes we don't always agree with the priorities and our confidence in our government is tested from time to time, but generally we believe in Canadian goodwill to address these kinds of issues, to make things equitable for all. We just hope that in regard to this issue we will not be taking one step forward and two steps back.

Lastly, we have to do this for our children, because for people who are not getting jobs, their children are losing interest in school. They don't see the point of going to school. So I think we need to do that.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Thank you.

Mr. Udedibia.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: I just want to share one successful model in terms of integrating professionals to come here or to get them into the workforce. That's a bridging program model whereby a post-secondary institution and industry, usually, not a specific employer, sometimes meet immigrants of an agency, develop a program that is acceptable to the industry, delivered by a post-secondary institution here, and graduates from that program will quickly get into that field.

That's a program that is working. There aren't many of them, but those that are there are working.

The other side of it that I'm worried about is sustainability in the long run. It's going to involve money, and we'll be asking everybody, including the federal government, to put in money. Will that money be there? But that's one that is working.

• (1650)

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Mr. Nallainayagam.

Mr. V. Nallainayagam: I must say, I was speaking as a Canadian, not as an Albertan. This is a parliamentary committee of Canada, so to me the issues are common to every province. Immigrants in any city or any province will face this, but since you wanted to go with some good impression about this province, I'm sure you'll be glad to know that this city, this province, has done a lot of work to create opportunities for immigrants here. The Catholic Immigration Society and other organizations have found them placements in various organizations and various businesses, and immigrants are able to integrate successfully because of the experience they have.

There are lots of other experiments going on in this city and in this province in order to facilitate the integration. So in what we have touched on, definitely there are success stories, but we wanted to highlight some of the issues that are important for the committee to

address at the committee level to come up with some suitable recommendations on a Canada-wide basis, irrespective of any province.

I know regulatory bodies are provincial jurisdiction, but the issues we have raised are also federal issues, about funding, support for them, and information sharing, and educating employers. That was all.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): All right. Thank you.

I just want to give each of you an opportunity to advise the committee: if there were one single thing you would like us to recommend to alleviate this difficulty in the area of credentials, what, in a nutshell, would that be? Tell us very briefly, so that it will sink in, but I think it would be helpful for you to just give us the number one thing to do.

Maybe we'll start with you, Mr. Rasheed.

Mr. Muhammad Rasheed: I'd like to see national standards. They should be accepted all across Canada. I think that will reduce the problem we are facing with the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications.

Ms. Teresa Woo-Paw: I would like to see standardizations through a multi-stakeholder approach—the same thing—to have the three governments working with the regulatory body.

Mr. Ramesh Joshi: Just as ISO has standards for everything in the world, and everybody's following them, we could have the same standards for education, and if you have these qualifications, you'll be accepted. This can be done on the Internet; it doesn't have to be done by anything else. It is so easy.

Mr. V. Nallainayagam: Since they are passionate on the issue, I would say more support for integration of new immigrants to come into the country, more funding in terms of bridging programs for them, job shadowing, and language training. So funding's an important issue to successfully help them integrate.

Mr. Jude Udedibia: I think I'll recommend to the committee to look at the United States' model of exam-based re-entry into your profession, in the sense that if in my profession I was grandfathered and I wanted to practise in the U.S., I'd take an exam. If I passed that exam, I'd be a professional as far as they were concerned. It would be worth looking into. Thank you.

Mr. Joe Ceci: Lastly, find a way to encourage employers to bring on and assist professional immigrants in their chosen profession, to find a way to incentivize business and employers to do that.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy): Good. Well, they're very practical.

I just want to make the point that with respect to national standards, that of course means agreement by 10 provinces and three territories. So you do understand and know that it would be a tremendous challenge, and trying to get 13 people to agree plus the federal government could try the patience of Job, I'm sure, but it is an ideal to strive for. So we certainly won't write that one off, even though it's a tough one.

Well, again, it was such a pleasure to have you here. Last time the committee made its rounds, you probably know, it missed Calgary, and I have no idea why because we got the best information here so far...well, no, but excellent advice and resources. Thank you all very, very much.

We'll adjourn the meeting at this point.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.