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Chair

The Honourable Andrew Telegdi

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● (1110)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.)): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Before we get into our regular business for the day, I want to inform all members of the committee that Bill S-2, about lost Canadians, went through the House yesterday on division. It's now awaiting a government bill for royal assent, and it gets sort of tagged along to it. So let's hope we're going to have a government bill that's going to go along.

All of you know Don Chapman. He's back there, and he's done a real battle on this, as well as Magali Castro-Gyr. She has been battling on this as well. Anyway, it's great to have something solved, so thank you very much.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Invite us to your citizenship ceremony, Don. We want to be there. That will be a great occasion.

Now we're going to move to our witnesses. This is about international credentials. We're going to start with Terry-Anne Boyles.

It will be seven minutes for all people, and then we go to questions and answers.

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles (Vice-President, Members Services and Public Policy, Association of Canadian Community Colleges): Thank you. Bonjour.

It's a pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

The association represents all of the community colleges, university colleges, technical institutes, and CGEPs in Canada—155 institutions with campuses in over 900 Canadian communities.

Immigration is one of the four strategic priorities of our board of directors within our broader mandate of representing the voice of Canada's colleges nationally and internationally. Thus, it's with real pleasure that we appear today. Our association has about 60 staff, and we are pleased to say that 15 of our staff were born overseas and immigrated as adults, so that gives us a wealth of resources internally as we do work on behalf of our member institutions.

In terms of their staffing, the institutions themselves probably reflect other organizations in the country, where the immigrants tend to be in more entry-level and mid-level jobs and aren't yet reflected in some of the senior-level jobs. That's an area of focus we're working on as we do a national sector study of our colleges as employers. We'll be doing that over the next 18 months.

However, in terms of immigration and refugee settlement, Canada's colleges and institutes have been partners with the federal government, with provincial and territorial governments, and with immigrant-serving agencies almost since their inception, certainly 30 to 35 years ago in most areas of the country. Those partnerships are in the very large metropolitan areas through to smaller centres, such as Red Deer and refugee settlement programs, through to programs in Manitoba in some of the smaller communities tied to the skilled workforce or in the northern communities in the oil sands, for example. So we bring experience and capacity across the breadth and depth of Canada.

I want to give one context of a large urban college, just so you'll know how this permeates the system as a whole, and that's Centennial College in the Scarborough area of Toronto. It's a very large institution, and 40% of their current student body have a mother tongue other than English or French—this is the full-time student body, beyond the students who are learning a second language and in workforce training programs. In business and technical programs, that mother tongue is at around the 50% level. There are 100 self-declared, multi-ethnocultural groups that have been declared, and there are over 80 languages spoken on the campus. So in a centre such as Scarborough, immigration permeates, regardless of whether it's new immigrants or longer-term immigrants in the system.

I know a number of the other groups coming before the committee have talked about some of the broader issues on immigration and immigration settlement. Our input deals specifically with foreign credential recognition and work experience overseas, but we wish to contextualize it in a larger study we have done. In your kits, our input for today's hearing is on the left and our broader survey and diagnostic of the system as a whole is on the right.

We undertook that survey and diagnostic last year with the support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and a national round table that included our partners from immigrant-serving agencies and federal and provincial governments, etc. It is the basis for professional development work and our work with other groups across the country. That is on the right, and certainly there's a wealth of wider issues—barriers, opportunities, challenges, and ways the colleges contribute—in that document.

I'd like to draw your attention to the process model we use that is in your kit. It's a very complex model, but it really shows how we see the assessment processes in the recognition of foreign credentials as one piece of the larger context. It also shows where we see the immigration portal for Canada as a real key resource, not only for potential immigrants to Canada and existing immigrants but for all of us who work in the field, so we can have one window into the resources, and in this case around the resources and partnering around foreign credential recognition.

● (1115)

In our work on thinking through our documentation, our thinking through of the system, we've done a lot of work and considered the work that the Maytree Foundation has done over the last couple of years. And we see it as a multi-dimensional model through which all groups could link and look at the way they work with immigrants and refugees in the country.

I've highlighted in the brief several areas where we partner with a number of agencies. We've spoken to the apprenticeship areas and the work that is already being done, and the value of the red seal program for mobility across the country, but also about some of the challenges that are there. We talked about the ongoing work and the momentum that's beginning to take place with the regulatory agencies, many of which do regulate the programs, and the colleges and institutes—although out of the larger immigrant pool that is more in the 15% range—so we've put more of our attention on some of the non-regulated areas.

We pay particular attention to the national industry and the human resource development sector councils. And certainly the tourism sector council speaking today is a core partner and is demonstrative and illustrative of the type of work that human resource sector councils of labour and business together with our colleges' other educators are bringing together in terms of national occupational standards, promotion, work relative to immigration settlement, and credential assessments in which we can all partner together. It's a very important piece of the work of the association.

In that, we are particularly valuing the positioning of the foreign credential unit within Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, particularly within the workplace area. That's where it brings complementarity to our work with the sector councils and the other partners working on labour market integration in the country. And this is all we need. More coordination certainly gives us one vehicle to bring all of us together.

In the document I also talk about the Canadian language benchmarks, which many institutions, industry, etc., are beginning to use as a basis and are expanding on that. I also talk about an overseas project. The overseas initiative is building on the resources that already exist with colleges, institutes, universities, and other partners overseas to do some pre-work in Canada. And then more particularly, I look at the reference and recommendations where we could accelerate the capacity of Canada's colleges and institutes.

I would be pleased to answer any questions on any of these areas or come before the committee again on the wider issues.

● (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we'll have David Onyalo.

Mr. David Onyalo (National Director, Anti-Racism & Human Rights Department, Canadian Labour Congress): Thank you for inviting the Canadian Labour Congress to make a presentation today.

As was indicated by my colleague, Hassan Yussuff, I'll do a verbal presentation and then we'll combine our statements around citizenship and the recognition of international credentials into one brief, which we will then forward to the committee. Hassan Yussuff was planning to come here, but unfortunately, as he was preparing for this presentation, he had to be pulled into an emergency meeting. He sends his apologies.

In terms of my opening comments, I want to say that in order to do justice to the issues that have been raised in regard to the recognition of international credentials, it's really important to put it into the context of untapped skills and underutilized labour within our borders. It's also important to remember that in the majority of cases we are actually talking about workers who are either permanent residents or Canadian citizens, most of whom happen to be workers of colour.

Even though the issue of temporary migrant workers is not the main topic for your discussions, they are often brought up when we are talking about the recognition of international credentials. Indeed, they are related in that we are trying to address the existing and future skills shortages due to the changes in the demographics and their impact on the Canadian labour force.

On the recognition of international credentials, I would like to make the following points.

We are aware that on April 25 the federal government launched an initiative around internationalliy trained workers and that also on March 21 it launched a government anti-racism national action plan. These initiatives touch on a number of areas of interest to our work as unions, and are related to the criticisms of various levels of government.

I want to highlight the following points.

The main point is around an integrated approach by the federal government. We commend the government in appointing the Honourable Hedy Fry to lead interdepartmental discussions on how to approach the issue of recognition of international credentials. However, we see this as a first step. We would like to see a long-term process that brings together unions, employers, and the sector councils together on a regular basis to work around this issue.

It's also no longer acceptable that job creation and labour force initiatives of all levels of government are not interconnected somehow in tangible ways with the Canadian immigration processing system. We now have thousands of professionals and trades people either underemployed or unemployed in different urban centres in this country.

I would like to see more funds invested in programs geared toward the recognition of international credentials and the development of programs to enhance the entry of recent immigrants into apprenticeship programs and skilled trades.

On the broader discussion around integrating workers into our workplaces and communities, the CLC can use structures that involve federations of labour in different provinces, labour councils, which are mostly in big urban centres, to do certain things. For example, on information sharing, with funding support from different levels of government, we can provide community-based information centres. These centres would be able to provide information on issues such as labour standards, health, and safety regulations and human rights legislation in respect to working people.

In the workplace, unions can also build on the work that we're now doing annually in respect to what we can bargain across the bargaining table with employers, joint workplace training and educational programs and also through our anti-racism programs, which would provide a respectable environment that respects the diversity of our country.

We are also well placed to enter into discussions with those community groups that are already doing some work around bridging programs such as literacy skills and language training.

Let's spend a little bit of time talking about temporary migrant labour. In the recent past there has been a great deal of controversy over the prospect of international workers working in construction projects in western Canada. We have been hearing from union members and the leadership of unions who are frustrated that it looks like employers are going overseas to recruit workers despite available skills in Canada. Also, we cannot allow the issue of immigration and migration to be used as a backlash against immigrants, particularly people of colour, even though significant numbers of these international workers come from different parts of the world, particularly eastern Europe.

In respect to migrant workers, I'd like to highlight the following points.

The federal, provincial, and territorial governments must take full responsibility for ensuring that international workers are protected by the same internationally-recognized labour and human rights standards.

The federal, provincial, and territorial governments should actively seek the input of unions on discussion around skills and demand and also examine the present barriers that prevent workers in Canada from working in different regions of the country.

● (1125)

We are also asking that there should be a way whereby workers can access education and training leave with support from employment insurance.

We are also encouraging the immigration of skilled trades workers and recommend facilitating their inclusion in the job market through the permanent residency process, the recognition of credentials, language training, and the active promotion of racism-free workplaces.

In conclusion, let me say the Canadian Labour Congress is really calling on the federal government to bring stakeholders such as unions to a meeting to determine and discuss the impacts on developing countries of the recruitment of their skilled workers for jobs in Canada, including issues such as the positive impacts of remittances and negative impacts such as the loss of trained health care workers—in particular, ways of supporting or rebuilding public service sectors and national and local communities.

Thank you for listening to me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we have Mr. John Pugsley.

Mr. John Pugsley (Registrar-Treasurer, Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to present to you today.

My name is Dr. John Pugsley. I'm the registrar-treasurer of PEBC, the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada.

Just by way of background, the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada is the national certification body for the pharmacy profession in Canada. We have more than forty years of experience in assessing candidates for entry into practice. The purpose of PEBC is to assess the qualifications of both Canadian and foreign-trained graduates to ensure pharmacists entering the profession have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to practise safely and effectively. The board evaluates qualifications, develops and administers national examinations, and issues certificates of qualification.

I just want to talk for a couple of minutes about our credentialing requirements.

International pharmacy graduates—I'll call them IPGs—must complete a three-step assessment process with the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. The first step is document evaluation, and that verifies the candidate's identity and the legitimacy of the candidate's academic credentials.

The second step is the evaluating exam, which evaluates the candidate's knowledge in the major areas of Canadian pharmacy education. I want to add that the candidates may travel to Canada or to London, England, to take this examination prior to immigrating to Canada, so they can start this process well in advance.

The third step is the qualifying examination, which consists of two parts. It's a written examination and there's a performance-based component, which I've outlined in more detail in my brief. This exam is required of both Canadian graduates and international pharmacy graduates, and it ensures successful candidates have met the Canadian standard of competence as defined by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities.

If you look at figure 1 in my brief, you'll see there's been a steady increase in the number of international pharmacy graduates progressing through the PEBC certification process over the last 10 years. The number of document evaluations for IPGs has increased by 275%. In 2004 IPGs represented 38% of the candidates who successfully passed part one and part two of our qualifying exam and received PEBC certification. This is in comparison to the 590 Canadian graduates, who represented 62% of the Canadians registered with PEBC.

Although the overall number of candidates passing has risen since 2001, there's a significant difference between the number of IPGs who pass our first step, the evaluating exam, and the number who continue and pass a qualifying exam: a higher number pass our evaluating exam. This may be due in part to a lack of clinical applied knowledge, of the ability to apply knowledge, of practice experience, or of familiarity with the Canadian health care setting and system and Canadian standards of practice. I think this emphasizes the need for bridging education and the need for structured practical training to assist candidates to be better prepared prior to challenging our qualifying examination.

Many international pharmacy graduates, often due to economic reasons or for pressures from recruitment firms, may be attempting our examinations without adequate preparation and without educational bridging, which includes language proficiency training and communication skills supports. The Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada recommends that supports for the international pharmacy graduates be strengthened in a number of ways.

Our first recommendation is that there be support for initiatives to provide improved information to overseas applicants to provide them with realistic expectations for obtaining pharmacy licensure in Canada. They need to understand the level of proficiency that's required and how practice is in Canada.

Second, we recommend that there be financial support for university programs to develop or enhance bridging education for IPGs. This is one of the main recommendations I want to emphasize.

The third recommendation is that there also be financial support for these individuals who choose to undertake bridging education.

The fourth recommendation is that there be support for collaborative initiatives to conduct research and needs assessments to identify appropriate educational mechanisms such as mentorship, practice training opportunities, and bridging programs that will solidly support the successful integration of IPGs in Canada. Also included in this recommendation is support for the establishment of a task force, with funding support by HRSDC. This task force would identify the issues faced by international pharmacy graduates and would make recommendations for projects and research that would assist the IPGs.

● (1130)

The second-last recommendation is that there be support for HRSDC funding for the proposed pharmacy sector study of pharmacy human resources and future needs. There is a strong need to define a human resource strategy for pharmacists. We need to invest in our pharmacy resources and look at the planning.

The last recommendation is that there be financial support for pharmacist practitioners who are willing to undertake an active supervisory role in providing workplace training for international pharmacy graduates.

In conclusion, the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada ensures that pharmacists entering practice have an appropriate level of competence and that it's a vital component in the delivery of safe and effective health care to Canadians. We continue to evaluate and enhance our certification process, including looking at issues of accessibility. We also maintain appropriate assessment standards that are defensible and ensure public safety.

I thank you for the opportunity to present today.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next we have Mr. Philip Mondor.

Mr. Philip Mondor (Vice-President and Directior of Development, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council): Good morning.

Thank you, on behalf of the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council.

The tourism industry in Canada is a very large entity. We represent more than 10% of the labour market. Last year, we accounted for $22.6 billion, or 1.99% of Canada's GDP, at market prices.

Our sector is well known because we are quite pervasive in the occupations we cover, all of which are in the non-regulated sphere. Our average turnover is around 32% per year. We're growing at a higher rate per annum than most of the other sectors in Canada. So this issue is really all about labour shortages, and chronic ones at that.

We are one of the leading national sector councils. Our mandate is to bring together all the stakeholders in the sector—business, education, labour, and government—to work to address labour market issues. The concern of labour supply and mobility are high on our agenda, so many of our projects and activities are in support of this initiative. The work on occupational standards or competencies specifies what's required to be employable in these professions in Canada—the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that an employer would be looking for. We've built assessment systems. These are all competency-based, and they help support the whole mobility framework.

What we're recommending has to do with the non-regulated professions. Currently, in Canada, and indeed in most countries, there are very few actual credentials for non-regulated professions. In our opinion, the focus should move towards an assessment of newcomers' competencies, since the competencies are a currency that can be used for benchmarking against academic or other credentials.

We also realize that a competency system can support cross-sectoral labour mobility, which is very important because one in three people who work in the tourism sector will migrate to other professions within two years of their employment. Indeed, many of these are immigrants trying to find employment in the professions they've been trained in. In Canada, because competency systems don't exist, there are a number of options.

We've already done some demonstration projects on how the competency system can be used outside of Canada. If a system exists, we can do comparisons. Our recommendations focus on how to make this happen. For example, there needs to be greater collaboration among the agencies that provide these services. This includes the colleges. We've been working with ACCC on a demonstration project aimed at developing an international credit transfer system. It is proving very fruitful, and we're going to continue to build on it. Our demonstration work has been done in the Caribbean, Hong Kong, and Australia.

Language is a key concern. Our recommendations focus on workplace-based language training, which is fundamental. All of this training should be based on language benchmark work. From an immigration standpoint, the system doesn't favour lower-skilled requirements. Focusing on the competency system would help us to define mobility and learn to manage it.

With respect to sector councils, we have a role in contributing to the information that newcomers require on language requirements, competency requirements, training and education opportunities, and so forth. We can link individuals directly to the employer.

I will conclude by saying that the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council and other sector councils are promoting the idea that we should move towards a competency-based approach to recognize international experience or credentials. This will help us look at equivalencies and gaps. It will promote various plans for individuals so that they can fully integrate into the Canadian workplace.

Thank you.

● (1135)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ)): Thank you very much for your presentations. We will now go to questions by committee members.

I give the floor to Ms. Helena Guergis.

[*English*]

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks very much to all of you for your presentations. They were all very helpful, with some good recommendations for integrating foreign-trained professionals into the Canadian market.

Most of my questions will be specific around funding. Have any of you been able to do a breakdown? If you were coming to the minister and coming to the government and asking them for a certain amount of dollars, would you be able to give us an approximate figure of what you think you might be looking for?

As a question for all of you except Ms. Boyles, do you think you would support what she's talking about here, about having a college and institute process model for helping all your professions? Would you support a model through the colleges and institutes?

Mr. David Onyalo: Maybe I'll start.

We haven't gotten to the point where we can actually give you specific figures in terms of the types of funding that we require. We think the first step is really for the Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliates to have a meeting with HRSDC officials, and based on our needs, we'll be in a better position then to provide actual figures.

In terms of the model that's presented by Ms. Boyles, again, I haven't seen it. I'd have to take a close look at it and see if it's something that can help the Canadian Labour Congress in its work.

● (1140)

Mr. Philip Mondor: We are currently doing research to identify precisely what type of funding will be necessary to support this kind of working mobility, breaking it down by looking at the nature of the activities that we would suggest need to be done and then what it would take to support those activities. We will be tabling a report at the end of November. We have some preliminary ideas, but it's a fairly complex issue. So information can come in the future.

In terms of Terry-Anne's recommendations, we do believe in working with as many partners as possible. One of the strengths of the college system is that they do services overseas, so we would support the idea that the colleges play a role, a partnering role, in helping with, for example, competency assessment or some skills gap training overseas.

Our one key caveat or concern would be that those systems are driven by what is already used in Canada, that it's not duplicated, that it in fact is driven by what the sector council already has for the same kinds of assessment and training requirements, so that we can in fact communicate and look at those results meaningfully and not have to try to bridge the differences of their system versus ours.

Mr. John Pugsley: I would just comment that, as I think I mentioned as one of our recommendations, there needs to be support by means of bridging programs for international pharmacy graduates. There are, at the moment, two programs that have been established. One is at the University of Toronto, which I think you have heard about through a presentation from the Ontario College of Pharmacists, as well as through the Canadian Pharmacists Association. There is also a bridging program that has been established at UBC. I think these programs are extremely helpful to the international candidates to go through the system faster. Their success on our examinations is comparable to or close to that of the Canadian graduates.

Without the support, they experience a lot of difficulty, so I think these types of programs are very helpful. They need a tremendous amount of linguistic support, and that's part of these programs. So any program that would help provide linguistic support and support for them to understand the health care system better and integrate them would be helpful.

As to the costs, I really don't know what the specific costs are in assisting them. Certainly the tuition fee at the University of Toronto is fairly high, about $13,000 to take this program. So there needs to be some kind of support to help these individuals through it.

Certainly we're seeking funds through the Canadian Pharmacists Association, as well as NAPRA and PEBC, to establish the task force. We have a concept proposal that has gone to HRSDC. That's asking for $110,000. The pharmacy sector study, which has not received funding from a different group of HRSDC, I believe is looking for about $1.5 million. That funding has been delayed for some time, but I think that particular study will help examine a lot of the issues that are happening within the profession.

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: In terms of costing in Canada, if you're doing a prior learning assessment recognition it typically averages about $45 to $50 per hour. If you were to do the equivalent of a typical one-semester course in a college or university, it would cost around $150 to $200 to do an actual assessment of a person's work and learning skills. That would be a typical pattern.

The bridging programs—as you would have heard in the presentation from Algonquin College on their allied health bridging nursing program—vary depending on which level of bridging you're doing, and whether you're doing a bridge that includes the clinical practicum and the cost of that. The costing models in applied sciences, technical programs, and some of the pharmaceutical programs would parallel those, if you do a full-year program.

On the business plan that we and the other partners have been working on with Human Resources Skills Development Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada for the overseas model on the pilot project, in the initial years the charge to individuals who want some assessments, information, and stuff would be $100 Canadian, because of how far Canadian dollars go within those home countries. That would also be subsidized by overarching support of the pilot initiative by the Canadian government and some of the provincial governments in the costing. But we can do costing models depending on different sectors of the economy.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: I should say that in terms of doing assessment centres and having one full assessment person in the centre and some support work, it almost parallels the cost of the research chairs program in the country, which is $250,000 per year. That's just for staffing and liaison money to other organizations.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): We will now hear Mr. Roger Clavet.

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to ask two questions. We will try to make the most of the time available. My first question is for the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada, and my second one will be for the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

My first question deals with evaluating examinations. The document states that, in order to determine whether the foreign candidate has completed a program of study comparable to Canadian programs accredited by the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs, he must go through an evaluating evaluation and, later on, qualifying examinations. In all cases, these are multiple choice question exams. I am trying to imagine what these multiple choice questions could be in the case of a pharmacist. Are the examinations modified each year? It is easy to obtain copies of them. Eventually, over time, candidates could get hold of them. I was wondering how accurate this kind of tool can be. It is somewhat like asking us, members of Parliament, whether we are: A - Competent, B - Honest, C - Brave, D - None of the above. I would like first of all to know the degree of accuracy of these multiple choice exams.

[*English*]

Mr. John Pugsley: The multiple-choice exam is the evaluating exam, which is the first step. The second level is a qualifying exam that everyone must write. It contains multiple-choice questions that are also case-based, so that exam focuses more on a higher cognitive level to be able to apply knowledge. So they're asked questions about cases. Then we have a performance-based exam, where we use simulated patients and health care practitioners. That is very much a competency-based assessment.

The evaluating exam, which is the first step, is multiple choice, but we use various cognitive levels within that to really test their foundation knowledge. I've listed in the appendix the areas that are tested there. So if that particular exam happens to relate to therapeutics, we may use a case-based approach where it's not just rote, and they have to apply their knowledge. So the use of multiple-choice exams is a technique so you can get at more than just memory.

But we initially test their foundation knowledge, and then the next step, the qualifying exam, is a very focused competency-based assessment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: I now turn to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. Your document contains an interesting example, that of the cégep du Vieux-Montréal and its early childhood education program. It was discovered that 60 to 65 per cent of students enrolled in the early childhood education program were immigrants. It must have been quite a surprise to discover that 60 to 65 per cent of students enrolled in the early childhood education program were immigrants. What did the association do to adapt these programs?

[*English*]

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: The association has done several things.

By chance, yesterday I was actually talking to Jean-Denis Asselin, the directeur général du Vieux-Montréal. In terms of early childhood education programs, in particular, we have a national partnership with the Canadian Child Care Federation. We have been working with them for about ten years, with a national steering committee of people from colleges across the country, including Vieux-Montréal, in terms of adapting outcome-based standards to meet the needs of the early childhood industry in the country. In particular, because of the numbers of people who go into early childhood programs or domestic service or the health care professions, probably some of the most progressive work has been in those areas in terms of adapting to the specific needs of the workers.

I believe that Confederation College has a special early childhood education program that's actually delivered in Turkish, or their early childhood workers are working within the Turkish community in the broader community. They are working on some of the principles of the underpinnings of cultural awareness, early childhood education in the Canadian context, and bridging programs for children from the various ethnic groups into the French and English school systems, as they move into those.

Colleges are the largest trainers of early childhood educators.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: That is a good example of an association that is responsive to foreign students after founding that they represent 65 per cent of students in a given area. They then decided to do some adjustment to their programs. It shows that organizations can also adapt their programs according to the skills of their clients.

[*English*]

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: Absolutely. In the mid-1970s I actually ran the boat people settlement centre at Red Deer College in Central Alberta and the Chilean programs. We had major adaptations of the programs in the existing program base, doing professional development with the staff on how to use program acculturation and adaptation programs

In that case, it was building English as a second language and advanced language skills into the various sub-program areas, so that the Canadian-born educated students and the immigrant and refugee students in those programs came out with the same outcome of competency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Mr. Siksay, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, everyone, for your presentations this morning. They've been very helpful.

I have a question for Mr. Onyalo from the Canadian Labour Congress. I'm glad that you raised the whole question of anti-racism work. I know that the CLC has been very active and is probably one of the most active organizations in Canada to address issues of racism.

We've heard from other witnesses in our cross-country tour and in our work on foreign credentials. Some have stated very clearly that racism is an issue, with the difficulties that foreign-trained workers face when they come to Canada. Others have kind of hinted at it, and some have been reticent to even go down that path. I'm glad that it was named this morning.

David, could you expand a little on the CLC's work in that area? Have there been any successes, particularly on the employer side of things? I think that we've often heard of individuals who have been making a difference, but we haven't heard a lot from this side on what responsibility employers have been taking and how attitudes have been changing among employers. We've heard about the other side of the equation, but not so much on that one. Do you have anything that you can add to the discussion?

Mr. David Onyalo: Thanks for that question.

We've been doing our present work for a long time in terms of consolidating whatever has been taking place within the different affiliates. We've also been doing work in terms of trying to push the various levels of government, particularly the federal government, to take seriously the issue of addressing the types of racism that are faced by particular sectors of our community.

Let's take, for example, the federal government. One of the things we've been pushing this government to do is to clearly build on its existing employment equity program, in respect to federal government employees, but also in respect to those agencies that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

So when the government recently announced its racism-free workplace strategy, one of the things we told them was yes, it's important to go in the community and talk to community groups about racism, but when it comes to workplace racism, two key players are needed—the unions that represent workers in that particular workplace, and the employers as well. You're never going to solve a problem in workplaces where you have a union unless the employer and the union are at the table talking about recruitment strategies, talking about internal mobility, and talking about systemic barriers in terms of racism.

So we see that as a major responsibility for the Canadian Labour Congress to keep on pushing the federal government in terms of its anti-racism initiatives.

One of the things we also do in terms of using our own internal structures is to point out that one of the biggest drawbacks in terms of work around increasing the representation of people of colour into our workforce is what happened in the province of Ontario when a sitting government got rid of employment equity. We think one of the things that people don't talk about in public is that employment equity is actually a strategic tool to increase the number of people of colour in our workplaces. And if it was done properly, we would not be having as many people right now who don't have jobs because the recognition of their international credentials has not been taken into account.

I just want to reiterate the point you made at the very beginning of your comments. It's been very clear to us in terms of the studies we've done over the years that the fact is that people of colour don't have the same access to unemployment programs, don't have access to jobs, and that racism has been the issue. There is no doubt about it, and we all can see it visibly in terms of who has a PhD and has to drive a taxi, who is unemployed. Racism is a clear issue.

In terms of the attitudes of employers, from my own experience in terms of the work that I did around employment equity discussions in Ontario, there are actually employers who were onside because they saw a lot of advantages. They were saying that what they really need is skilled people, skilled labour, and they don't care which country they're from or what colour of skin they have. And there were employers who were actually very supportive of employment equity initiatives.

I don't want to take too much of the committee's time, but I'm really glad you asked that question. I will continue to do our work around anti-racism in terms of workplaces, but also as a part of broader political policy debates.

Thank you.

● (1155)

Mr. Bill Siksay: I think I might have a bit more time.

David, I also wanted to ask you about your final suggestion around a meeting or some further discussion around the ethical implications of our immigration policies and our policies to recruit skilled workers from other countries. I wonder if you have anything further to add on that one, because I think it's a very important one, and we've heard as well from other witnesses on this.

Mr. David Onyalo: Thanks again.

As you all know around this table because of the work you've been doing, global migration is a reality. The reality is that most of the people who are trained in the south—whether they are doctors, pharmacists, tradespeople—have the potential of migrating to European countries, migrating to Japan, migrating to Canada.

The problem is that these are people who were educated in countries now having crises in terms of holding on to their educational systems, holding on to their health care systems. I think it's incumbent upon Canada in terms of the role it plays internationally to start to come to grips with the fact that it is vacuuming a whole number of trained people from different countries and leaving those countries with very few skills in certain sectors.

One of the things we'll be suggesting in such a meeting is to look at how we can start to rebuild those sectors—for example, how we can help the health care sector so that those institutions that train doctors and that train nurses are in a position whereby those countries can also meet their needs as well.

I think it's a global debate. I know countries such as South Africa are starting to take the lead on this in international debates, and I think Canada, because of the role it's played in the past in terms of providing a reasonable voice in international discussions, can help lead these discussions in terms of making sure that we are not leaving these countries helpless in certain situations because we've conveniently vacuumed all their skilled labour to help us grow economically.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Thank you very much.

Mr. Temelkovski, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madame Faille. Nice to see you in the chair.

Thank you to everyone for the presentations.

Dr. Pugsley, I'd just like to ask a number of questions in the pharmaceutical area. Would you say we have a shortage of pharmacists in Canada? Is there a number that we know of?

● (1200)

Mr. John Pugsley: Yes. I think that's been presented by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. They estimate there's a shortage of approximately 2,000 pharmacists or more at the moment. We're short approximately 7% of the workforce.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: How did we get to this level, the overall problem?

Mr. John Pugsley: I can comment, but I also have to indicate that my own role is more academic in terms of an examining body.

What I know about the profession is that there's been a tremendous expansion with respect to community pharmacies. There have been a lot of chain drugstores that have opened up new pharmacies. A lot of the pharmacies are open long hours. In food stores, sometimes they're open for 24 hours. So they must have a pharmacist there in order to sell some of the over-the-counter drugs.

This expansion has created it. That's causing a problem in certain rural areas of Canada where it's difficult to get a pharmacist because they're going to the large urban areas where they're given higher salaries. They're working in these settings.

I don't know if people are experiencing difficulties getting their prescriptions filled. I think it's a different factor. That's why I think the pharmacy sector study is important. We have to really examine within the profession how we utilize pharmacists, how we utilize technicians, how we utilize automation, and what is the actual need in terms of services that are to be provided. So I really think this has to be looked at. As I say, the business part has expanded and caused this need for pharmacists.

There's a huge number—I'd mentioned the figures—of pharmacists coming in. Again, it comes back to this question of ethics. We don't want to establish examination centres in countries where there is a shortage. I understand, now, our largest number of pharmacists come from Egypt and that they're experiencing a shortage there.

We have to increase the number of graduates within our profession. We haven't done that. Ontario has only one school of pharmacy. Quebec has two schools of pharmacy. We are expanding. We went from 120, up to 190, to 240 in the University of Toronto program, but there are not enough Canadian pharmacists being trained. That has to be looked at very seriously to help deal with this problem.

There's going to be an increasing need, because of the increasing age of our population. So there are a number of factors. I think the profession really has to look very closely as to how pharmacists are being utilized.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: I see in figure 2, on page 5, that in 1995 there were 600 pharmacists who graduated and in 2004 there are just under 600. There's a fluctuation upward and downward, below 600, but it seems to be kind of close and flat.

Mr. John Pugsley: It's pretty close, yes. It's flat. It has not been increasing, because of the lack of funding in the university settings for students.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So is there a limit as to how many seats there are in the pharmacy studies at the U of T or wherever?

Mr. John Pugsley: There are, because of the facilities and the staff. It's a budgetary consideration. They have at least five and maybe in some schools ten applicants for every one they accept. So there's certainly not a problem with attracting people into the profession. The problem is the funding for the university. I used to be at the University of Toronto, and the funding was inadequate. There wasn't the staffing to increase the enrolment to support them.

So that's what's needed. I think we have to become more self-reliant.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Yes, you mentioned that there's a study that's not funded, for $1.5 million—

Mr. John Pugsley: The pharmacy sector study, the Canadian Pharmacists Association—

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So are we still at the study stage in the pharmaceutical industry?

Mr. John Pugsley: In the profession of pharmacy?

● (1205)

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Yes. Are we still at the study stage?

Mr. John Pugsley: It's a sector study phase and it has not yet received funding. It's been six years in the process.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So to implement it, we're looking at maybe another five years—

Mr. John Pugsley: I hope not. The sector study is scheduled, once it's up and the research is done, to be completed within a three-year period. But some of the recommendations can come earlier.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Such as increasing the number of spaces available?

Mr. John Pugsley: The number of spaces, and I think the utilization of pharmacists also has to be closely examined within the profession.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Well, I know that some of the duties of a pharmacist have been passed down to the techies.

Mr. John Pugsley: To the technicians? To some degree, yes.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Technicians, the ones who are licensed, I believe, or certified can now—

Mr. John Pugsley: The Ontario College of Pharmacists is seeking registration, the ability to regulate and register pharmacy technicians. And this specific group of individuals will be able to do more functions that are delegated to them. So they're moving forward on that. A submission has gone to the provincial government for that, and I believe Newfoundland is also looking at that, so that more delegated acts can be done by technicians.

The issue with technicians is that some of them come from community colleges, some of them come from private colleges, some of them are trained on the job, and some of them take a Shoppers Drug Mart course for two weeks. So their qualifications vary.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: And therefore certification for them is essential, I guess.

Mr. John Pugsley: Yes, in order for them to assume greater responsibility. And that's one of the things our organization is going to be looking at. We're exploring this opportunity with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, because if they're going to be tech checking tech, there needs to be assurance that they do have those appropriate skills or can take verbal orders, etc.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: So are there then more spaces for technicians available? Is it easier to get spaces for technicians?

Mr. John Pugsley: What do you mean by spaces?

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: To study, to have more technicians enter the pharmacy profession and therefore have them certified as technicians and undertake more responsibility.

Mr. John Pugsley: I don't know from the community college perspective. I know that the numbers have been increasing, that it may help. Obviously the final responsibility will lie with the pharmacists. But again, that's why the sector study is important, to really look at how we can move the profession forward. And it's not just pharmacists; it's the pharmacy technicians.

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: In the Alberta case specifically, there are pharmacy technology programs run at, I believe, three of the colleges, and they have been running since the late seventies. In those cases, the colleges worked with the university pharmacy programs and also the pharmaceutical association in Alberta to develop the sequential outcome standards so that the pharmacy technicians, then technologists—there are two levels—would do the complementary piece.

And there are ongoing program advisory committees that involve all of the partners to guarantee the momentum, the movement between the fields, and the sequencing and task assignments. That being said, in most programs there are limited spaces available. There are limited pharmacy technician and technologist programs in the country as a whole, and those programs, to the best of my knowledge, are full and have wait lists.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: With waiting lists?

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: That's my knowledge in pharmacy. I'd have to check that across the country. And certainly in the sector studies.... We work nationally on sector studies and will be working on this particular sector study when it gets off the ground.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Since the number of spaces for pharmacists within pharmacy—you call it pharmacy studies—at universities remains relatively flat, the academic requirement for students to enter has been increasing over the last 15 years.

Mr. John Pugsley: I don't know if the requirement has. They're four-year programs, and they require usually a one-year program with certain subjects prior to coming in. But most of the applicants already have a bachelor of science degree. We just have far more people who are qualified and who are seeking to come in. It's a matter of being able to accommodate these people.

There are changes happening. Many of the schools are trying to expand. As I say, the University of Toronto is going from 120 to 240. There's also a proposal at the University of Waterloo to start a pharmacy program that will initially enroll 120 graduates. And I know that UBC is increasing their enrollment, as well as.... There are gradual increases.

● (1210)

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Thank you.

Mr. Telegdi, it's your turn.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: I just wanted to make the point you just made about the University of Waterloo. It's going to have the second one in the province of Ontario, and it will grow in great leaps and bounds, no doubt.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): We are now beginning the second round of questions.

Mr. Clavet, the floor is yours.

Mr. Roger Clavet: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I found this whole discussion on credentials quite interesting. We always have this feeling that not enough is being done. I do not question what has been said here, that all parties are already doing a lot, be it unions, colleges, professional organizations such as pharmacists or even in the tourism industry. We have the feeling that there are a lot of good intentions around. It is somewhat of an omnibus issue. Are we going forward or backward or standing still? For the past several weeks, we have been discussing the issue of international credentials and good intentions are certainly not lacking.

It has been said that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. I would like every sector to tell me whether we are heading in the right direction. At the Canadian Labour Congress, for example, do you have the feeling that what is being done to recognize the input of foreign workers is good enough?

I was reading the brief from the Canadian Tourism Human Resources council. It says here that colleges are not offering any gap training. There are even groups that are accusing each other of not doing enough. I would like each of our witnesses to give me a brief answer. Are we doing enough? Are we heading in the right direction? Are we standing still?

[*English*]

Ms. Terry-Anne Boyles: In some program areas there are clearly skill-gap programs provided. It's one of the reasons we are working with the Canadian tourism sector council. And we have a synergy group of all the colleges in the country who run tourism-related programs, partnered with the people in the institution who run the immigrant settlement and integration programs working together to do some very specific developmental programs in those areas.

On the ESL-FSL funding in the country, a lot of it is at the entry level. When you're trying to do some of the more advanced levels, particularly when you're doing the bridge gap-filling program, there are limited resources for the individuals to partake of the training once we have programs developed—and there are programs that are developed. We'd like to see more sharing across the country. We'd like to see ways that our institutions and the partners in whatever industry—tourism in this case—might be able to work more closely on that. And of course the sector councils bring together business and labour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Mr. Onyalo, from the Canadian Labour Congress, are we making progress?

[*English*]

Mr. David Onyalo: Let me start by saying that we at the Canadian Labour Congress know, based on the figures we've been reading about the aging population, that our labour force is aging and we don't have enough people to replenish them for a little while, and that different countries of the world are also facing similar situations, particularly in the developed world. We think part of our responsibility is to always try to figure out how we can put the government and our own leadership in a position whereby we think in terms of the long term.

For example, we don't think the ultimate solution to skill shortages is to continually rely on bringing in temporary workers from different parts of the world. We think we need to really re-examine where we went wrong, why we've cut a lot of training funding.

There's very little support in some workplaces for providing workplace training where unions for a long time have been playing a really positive role. We think ultimately we have to be able to do those things as well, in terms of looking at our own training programs. We also have to look at—and some of these, I'm sure, have been mentioned in the committee hearings—the existing barriers between the different regions. If you're a tradesperson in British Columbia, you should be able to use your trade in another province, for example.

I think that, while we talk about the recognition of international credentials and the need to access certain skills from overseas, our primary responsibility is to look at some of the things that have been said today about our educational problems: whether we are producing enough skilled workers or not. But also, and I'm going to reiterate this, I don't think we have a choice. If we just assume that somehow the problem is going to solve itself, it's not going to solve itself. Other countries faced with similar situations are going to be able to access that pool of tradespeople or professionals from different countries.

It's almost as though we have a two-pronged process. We have to look at what's wrong with the existing problem—our existing system and how we fix it—while at the same time, the reality is we still have to go overseas to bring in temporary workers. There has to be a two-pronged approach.

I don't think it's totally the responsibility of the federal government. I think the federal government should engage its provincial counterparts very seriously on this issue, asking what it can do to make sure our labour force continues to grow and continues to be sustained on an ongoing basis.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet: Mr. Pugsley, briefly—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Mr. Clavet, we will go on.

Mr. Roger Clavet: That's fine.

[*English*]

Maybe later.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Monsieur Siksay.

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

I have a question for Mr. Mondor and the tourism council. In your brief, you said that in some ways the tourism sector would benefit from a lowering of the skill requirement for immigration to Canada. I'm wondering whether you've done any work to see whether most of the folks and new immigrants who are employed in the tourism sector come through the skilled worker section or are family-class immigrants who end up working in the tourism sector.

We've often heard, because of some of the frustrations of skilled workers, that family-class immigrants tend to be happier. They certainly tend to be happier workers, even in a lower-paying job, than someone who's highly skilled and ends up not being able to work in their own field. Do you have a sense of that for your industry—whether family class is maybe more important to your industry than skilled workers?

Mr. Philip Mondor: At the moment we would say it's more important, because we are employing a lot of people from the family class, but we also know it's not the only category. There are a lot of professional people in our sector. The classic example of the pharmacist or the doctor who is driving a cab—well, taxicab drivers are in our sector. We really have quite a mix there.

It's true the family class has a fairly significant representation in this sector, but there are a few interesting stories. I'll just give one example, because I think it relates to the point you're raising here.

We have some examples of people with highly skilled trades who come in and work in our sector and choose not to do anything other than the work they're in. We have an example in Atlantic Canada; she is employed as a housekeeper. She is very gainfully employed as a housekeeper, and very happy, and will choose to remain there. The stories we hear—and she is one good example I like to highlight—are that the stress she left behind, the issue of having to integrate into society, the issue of language—all of that is just too much of a barrier for her to overcome, and she doesn't want to lead that kind of stressful life anymore. The gainful employment she gets as a housekeeper, which pays her well, is more fruitful for her to pursue, so that's what she's doing. We have many examples of people who say that kind of thing.

On the other hand, we also have people like the taxicab drivers, who say their skills exceed what they are doing here and they'd really like to get into their preferred professions. One of the issues I would have brought up in response to the earlier questions is about systems—the lack of systems, really. We take it as a certain responsibility in our sector to help get the skills and training they require to help them migrate to the kind of profession they wish to be in. Most often the issue is a language barrier. On this, I would point to the Canadian language benchmarks. They are a very important tool we should all be using as the standard for defining language requirements, because if all sectors and all professions use that standard for defining language, then, in our case, as we try to skill up the individual, we can also show where they can be more viable to other sectors or their chosen profession. That's one example.

There are essential skills. There are advanced essential skills. There are technical skill areas, but the problem we face constantly in trying to assist those individuals is that the standards are not consistent across the country—that mobility is, in fact, hampered by different attitudes about what those standards should be, and that mobility in Canada in itself is a real problem. Until we get our act together in Canada to support mobility across our own borders, we'll have a really difficult time managing it across international borders.

To that point, in our sector as well, one of the other examples we have highlighted is this. Even though we are all non-regulated professions in our sector and have well over 400 professions we work with and recognize, a very large percentage of them also have some component of their employment that is regulated—for example, a food safety certificate requirement, a responsible beverage service requirement, a gaming licence, and those types of things. Even for that, in Canada at the moment, the requirements by provinces and territories are not at all parallel or alike. That compounds some of the issues and challenges we face.

We need to standardize the standards around how we define our competencies and our languages. The sector councils have been working in that vein. The sector council studies are helping to identify how we can be common in our approach to defining or articulating these issues. That way we can be singing from the same song sheet, rather than all having different approaches to it.

In our experience in tourism, because we've done a fair amount of work internationally as well, we are making progress. The issue of the Canadians working toward competency-based models is well heeded world-wide, because competencies are a currency we can communicate with and talk about, whereas credentials are very fuzzy to work with; it's like talking about apples and oranges. If you dig a little deeper, you can actually look at the skills more precisely.

I wish we were more consistent in our approach across sectors in Canada as well. That's one of the challenges we face.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Meili Faille): Thank you very much. Are there any other questions?

This brings to an end this part of our meeting. I would like to thank you once more for your presentations. We will examine all of your presentations as well as the documentation that you have provided. A report will be written soon, hopefully, and you will have the opportunity to read it.

Thank you very much.

We will suspend for five minutes.

● (1223)

(Pause)

● (1235)

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to resume our meeting. At first we're going to be in public and deal with the report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. You have the third report.

Mr. Temelkovski.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to move that we amend the report and strike out 12:15 in paragraph 3 and replace it with 12 o'clock, or noon, and also say that the committee invite Melynda Jarratt, a representative from Canadian War Brides, to appear on Tuesday, May 10, from 12 noon to 12:30.

The Chair: Ms. Jarratt is a real expert who wrote this book. Those of you who missed her missed a very knowledgeable person on this particular issue.

Helena bought the book. Have you read it yet?

Ms. Helena Guergis: No, I haven't had time.

The Chair: I told her that we want copies for all members of the committee.

Ms. Helena Guergis: I believe she's here today.

The Chair: She came down yesterday to watch the quiet debates and the private members' business when Bill S-2 went through.

Ms. Meili Faille: It was our best speech.

The Chair: So we have the amendment, or we moved a motion with that amendment.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Now we're going to move in camera to deal with giving instructions on drafting the report on revocation. We will suspend for 20 seconds.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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