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**Tuesday, September 26, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Norman Doyle**

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Tuesday, September 26, 2006

• (0925)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC)):** The meeting will now come to order. We are ready to proceed. All our technical problems have been ironed out.

I want to welcome on behalf of our committee the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance. I think we're all very familiar with the alliance. They represent approximately 450 immigrant and refugee settlement agencies from all across Canada.

Welcome.

I'm not familiar with the witnesses' committee. I know one member, who is from back in St. John's, Newfoundland, in my neck of the woods: Bridget Foster.

I want to welcome you in particular, Bridget.

Bridget comes bearing gifts this morning. She got some of our local Newfoundland candy, which she would like me to give to the committee members.

Thank you, Bridget.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** I thought she was going to bring screech.

**The Chair:** Well, it should have been. Maybe the next time we have her back we'll insist on that.

Normally, witnesses are given 15 minutes to begin with, to make an opening statement. If you wish, you may proceed to the introduction of your committee and then go to your opening statement, after which, of course, our committee members, starting here with the opposition members, will have discussion and questions and what have you. We will go around the table on seven-minute and five-minute rounds to have an open discussion with you.

Are you, sir, the chair of the committee? Okay, I'll turn it over to you. Please proceed.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi (Chair, Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA)):** Good morning, and greetings from the settlement sector across Canada.

My name is Reza Shahbazi. I am the chair of the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance. We will introduce ourselves, and then I'll start.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold (Member-at-large, Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA)):** Hello. My name is Stephan Reichhold. I am the director of the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes and I'm from the province of Quebec. We represent 132 organisations throughout Quebec who work with refugees and immigrants.

[English]

**Mr. Chris Friesen (Secretary, Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA)):** My name is Chris Friesen. I'm here representing AMSSA, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, the umbrella association in British Columbia, a group that represents over 80 multicultural and immigrant-serving agencies in British Columbia.

**Ms. Bridget Foster (Member-at-large, Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA)):** My name is Bridget Foster. I am from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, but today I'm representing the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies.

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian (Member-at-large, Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA)):** Good morning. My name is Fariborz Birjandian. I'm the executive director of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, but also I'm the chair of the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies.

**The Chair:** Again, welcome. You can proceed now to make your opening statement, if you have one.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** Thank you.

The members of the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance, also known as CISSA, represent 450 settlement agencies that provide direct services to refugees and immigrants in small communities and large cities across Canada. CISSA harnesses the expertise of the refugees and the immigrant settlement sector and is the sector's national voice to help build a Canadian society in which all immigrants and refugees are able to participate fully.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today. Our five delegates have been selected from 18 members of our board of directors who would have also welcomed the opportunity to be here today. However, as we only have in-person meetings once or twice a year, members of the board felt compelled to work on our strategy plan for the new fiscal year and beyond. That's why they are not here.

This September 2006, it is clear to our members and to the sector that we are embarking upon a new chapter in Canadian history. Not since the days of Clifford Sifton has Canada needed immigrants as we do today, to once again provide a new population and a critical workforce to stabilize Canada's effort to compete in an uncertain global economy.

The settlement sector is where the rubber hits the road, as they say in this country. In the past few decades we have experienced a wave of newcomers arriving at the doors of our agencies. We have shared their successes as well as their pain. As you know, the issues are many and complex: refugees arrive having suffered as victims of torture; highly educated doctors cannot get accreditation; families are separated because of long wait lists. I do not have to remind the learned members of this committee about the seemingly endless list. My task today and the task of the settlement sector is to make it all better. Within our agencies, within our communities, greater and greater needs and more and more groups want to partner with us to attract, retain, and integrate newcomers to our communities.

To do this well, and to do this effectively, the Canadian Settlement Sector Alliance needs your help—that's why we are here today. Out of the hundreds and possibly thousands of issues that we cope with every day, we believe that the Standing Committee on Immigration has to continue to be a leader for us to seek the knowledge that we require to successfully integrate the different categories of refugees and immigrants; to identify areas where government, regardless of which political party is in power, can support and enhance the work of the sector; and to be the committee that believes in the building of this great nation of ours.

At this time I would like to introduce my colleague, Mr. Birjandian, and he will give an update of the two reports that we have tabled with this committee.

Thank you.

• (0930)

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** Thank you.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Every year we have about 250,000 and soon over 300,000 people who will come to this country. We know there are a million people who want to come to Canada and we are bringing them into this country.

Looking at the experience of other countries, European countries and the United States, and the success that Canada has, obviously the key is that when bringing people to this country we make sure they settle well, integrate, and become part of our community. I think Canada has a lot to be proud of, with many years in partnership with communities, average Canadians, and governments at all levels. Obviously we have created this very hospitable country that we are very proud of.

Personally, I came as a refugee to Canada, so my feedback will be partly on a personal level as well. I've been involved with settlement and integration for the past twenty years.

We have submitted two documents: one is a brief on the finance, the other one a settlement allocation model. They have certain principles and I want to go through them very briefly.

With the finance and budget resources that become available in settlement integration, basically the principles we have identified are to provide for comprehensive settlement and integration services for all newcomers who come to this country and want to become part of this great country; to assist new immigrants to build their social capital and economic support network; and to promote public awareness and develop partnerships between all levels that are involved. I want to emphasize that we have to recognize that settlement and integration really happens very much at a community level: a school level, a neighbourhood level, and also at a workplace level. I think the decision you make and the attention you pay to the very important issue of settlement integration really pays off all the way through to the communities, and they feel it in the community.

Also, the settlement allocation model that we have proposed and are hoping to develop a framework on is that spending money is basically responsive because immigration is very fluid. Obviously people move to one city more than other cities. There are issues we have with the distribution of immigrants overall in the country, with 90% of the immigrants going to a very few cities. We want to change that. The framework that we have proposed on the settlement allocation model is hopefully to find solutions to some of the issues we have with settlement and integration of the newcomers to Canada and at the same time develop capacity within local communities, other cities, provinces, and on a national basis.

The issue is quite serious. I know that we live in a democratic country and the politics of the day changes, but I really am here to urge you to pay special attention to the settlement integration of people who are coming into this country.

As a newcomer myself, I don't think any country has to bring people into their country, just like you don't have to invite people to your home, but once you do that, the expectation is that you have a plan for your guest coming. That simple analogy is a way of looking at Canada's attitude towards the thousands of people who are coming into this country—250,000 from a hundred different countries.

We have done a great job. I've been involved with some of the work in Europe, and I know that we have a lot to celebrate and be proud of, but we're moving 250,000 people, even more, to a very knowledge-based society from a hundred different countries. I think the challenge is that we have to make sure they settle and become a part of this country. If we don't, then I think it's not going to be a positive experience for us, as a country, or for them, as an immigrant coming to this country.

Thank you.

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Chris Friesen; I am representing AMSSA, the provincial umbrella association.

In the context of British Columbia last year, to give you a snapshot to follow up what Fariborz was saying, almost 46,000 immigrants landed in British Columbia. It was the highest number in almost ten years. Of these, 40% were children and youth; 79% came from five Asian countries; the bulk—close to 86%—settled in the greater Vancouver area.

We are finding, as we talk across the country, that the capacity of our agencies to support immigrants so that they successfully integrate and are able to actively participate in Canadian society is being stretched. For over a decade now we haven't seen any increase in funding support to help with the outcomes of immigrants and refugees.

We're encouraged by the Conservative government and the funding that's currently on the table, the \$307 million, and we hope this begins to address some of the compounding issues that originated in the nineties. One of the concerns CISSA-ACSEI has pertains to the issue of comparable services in the country—the issue that immigrants landing in B.C. or Quebec or Newfoundland will see and be able to access the same range of the services and supports they need in order to successfully integrate.

We have some concerns about what is happening in this country around how investments are being made with respect to immigrant settlement and integration services. A particular example that I wish to point out today is the issue of adult language classes, ESL classes. In the context of British Columbia and under the B.C.-Canada agreement, Cooperation on Immigration, we're seeing a disturbing trend toward fee-for-service programming for adult ESL classes.

What this has done is create a two-tier system within the country, such that immigrants in one province have to pay for services, but if they land in another province they do not have to pay for those services. The most recent example is the English language training program, a badly needed program that we have been advocating for years, around higher-level English language training that is geared to the labour market. In British Columbia, immigrants are now asked to pay one third of that program, whereas in the rest of the country it is provided free of charge.

Our concern with this issue of comparable services, of national standards, in the context of the new money that's being presented by the Conservative government, the \$307 million, is that this money has to come along with some guiding principles and protocols about how the money is going to be invested. Our concern is that if we do not have comparable services in this country, then what we face is increasing interprovincial competition for immigrants where, as I say, immigrants can shop around to obtain higher levels of support in some areas of the country than in others.

As many people are aware, refugees and immigrants do not necessarily have the financial means to pay for their services. Under the previous Liberal government we were led to believe by the department when the “right of permanent residence” fee was introduced that immigrants were in fact prepaying their settlement and language services as part of their entrance into this country.

These are serious issues that we have serious concerns about, and they speak to the issue of providing adequate supports so that

immigrants have the ability to successfully integrate and contribute to Canadian society.

The last comment I wish to make is that in February 2005 Simon Fraser University released a report called “A System in Crisis”, which was the first comprehensive look at adult ESL and settlement services in the country. It was a snapshot of what was happening at that particular moment in time. As you, as committee members of the standing committee, begin to outline your agenda for this next year, one area we feel strongly about is that you should consider taking on the development of a white paper; that this committee should tackle through a white paper an analysis of comparable services in this country, of what is currently being presented to immigrants and refugees across the country using the resources of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

● (0935)

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have just one question. Is a lack of funding the major problem that settlement agencies and settlement organizations face in trying to assist refugees and immigrants to integrate into Canadian society? Is it the lack of funding that becomes the major problem? I was also interested in your comment on the inconsistencies, as you say, between one province and another in the funding they have to provide that service. Is a lack of funding the major problem?

● (0940)

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** I think we have to understand that close to two million immigrants and refugees have come to Canada in the last decade, and the sector that has been at the front line for over 50 or 60 years in providing adequate support services has not seen any increase in its baseline funding. If we are serious about dealing with our aging population, our demographics, our declining birth rate, and the skilled labour shortage, accelerating the number of immigrants coming to this country can't happen without an investment in ensuring that the capacity and the infrastructure are in place to support them. We know from the research on increased poverty rates, declining outcomes, declining labour market attachment issues—these are serious concerns that speak to social cohesion and other issues of Canadian society—that funding is definitely one of the issues we're grappling with.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have a speaking list right here.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** We have two. We have Ms. Bridget Foster and Mr. Reichhold.

**The Chair:** You're not finished your presentation, are you? Sorry to interrupt you.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** No, sorry.

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** The men have obviously taken up too much of our ten minutes, so I will be very brief. I have just a couple of points on the Metropolis project. This is something I'm sure you're all familiar with.

As an organization, we are becoming somewhat concerned that the research being conducted isn't necessarily reflecting the interests we have as the settlement sector. We would like to see some effort made to harness the research so that there are some definite outcomes and benefits to the sector. To be a bit blunt, the research could come down a bit more to a level at which settlement agencies would feel comfortable being involved and discussing issues. At times it gets quite mind boggling, and I feel there are really some lost opportunities. We would like the Metropolis project to be sensitive to the contribution that we can make.

There is another issue I would like to bring to your attention. Possibly you know the passion that I've had, since 30 years ago I came to Newfoundland, not as a refugee, but as a very reluctant immigrant. I landed in Gander, and as Norm can tell you, June 17 in Gander is very cold, and it was quite foggy. I went by bus to St. John's, and I announced I was not staying in that godforsaken country. Anyway, 30 years later I'm still there. I think because I was so concerned about how I misjudged that place, I have spent a very big part of my working life trying to promote the province. I believe all of the Atlantic provinces have a tremendous amount to offer.

We need help, though. We're losing people who are going to work in other provinces. We're all getting older, and we need, I believe, to make a much greater effort to recruit newcomers. Through the agency I work with, we receive 155 government-assisted refugees per year. We could easily cope with at least—even in incremental stages—50 more, 100 more. And I think this is the same for all the Atlantic provinces.

Finally, the provincial governments are buying into this. They are recognizing that it perhaps is the last hope we have to make things vibrant. So if by working together you can ensure that our provinces are going to maintain their position, I think that will be a wonderful legacy.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have just one more presenter. It is Monsieur Reichhold.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold:** I'm Stephan Reichhold, from the Quebec Coalition. I'd like to speak to you briefly about one of the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance's projects.

As Chris mentioned earlier, I'm sure you're aware of the fact that one of the greater challenges that we face in this sector throughout all of Canada is the problem of immigrant and refugee children and youth, whether they be first or second generation. We know that there are very few measures, and very few actions taken, within the reception and settlement services sector, that target this group even though a great many new immigrants are children and youth.

We plan to organize an important Canada-wide conference, probably during the spring of 2008, precisely to study this problem. We plan to have participants from within the settlement services sector, and also from all institutions and provinces, the private sector, every concerned group, to think about this question, to evaluate the present situation et to develop a national strategy for Canada to try to create services for this particular group of immigrants and adolescents.

We hope that the committee will support us in this important project.

● (0945)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

You've finished your presentation now, so we will go to our questioners.

You're first on the list, Andrew. If you would indicate if you're directing your question to an individual or to the committee generally, it might make it a little bit easier on the committee. The committee can feel free to refer the question on to someone who might have the particular expertise the committee member is talking about.

Andrew, please.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to all of you. Thank you for your work with the settlement services.

Mr. Birjandian, you mentioned that you were a refugee; so am I, and so is Rahim Jaffer. A number of us around this table were not born in this country, either.

I flashed on an interesting thing, Ms. Foster, when you were making your presentation. In British Columbia you had 46,000 people to settle last year. I remember that in 1957, when we got to British Columbia, my father managed to buy a house as soon as he got a full-time job. Now, I dare say, when I look at British Columbia, that wouldn't be possible. If I look at the east coast, that opportunity still exists there. When I went out to the east coast, it was quite amazing: somebody can buy a house. To the extent that it can be made known to people coming over, I think that could be very helpful.

There is another issue, and I'm going to throw this out to all of you. Having sat on the committee for a long time, I see two major problems. The first is that our point system doesn't reflect the skills needed in this country. Therefore, we have an estimated undocumented workforce of anywhere from 200,000 to 500,000 people. We actually had presentations made to this committee by some Atlantic business groups, asking that undocumented workers be sent to them instead of being sent out of the country. I'm sure our researcher can find it some place.

I would like your comments on those two particular questions.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** I can respond to at least one of the points in terms of the point system.

Definitely there could be some improvement in the point system. One of the biggest problems we are seeing in terms of assigning points to people with expertise and experience is when somebody applies abroad and they present their credentials, those credentials are not assessed based on Canadian standards, but the points are given based on what is provided. First of all, there is an impression given to the person that their credentials are being recognized by the Canadian government because they receive points for that. They receive points for their education, their work experience, so their education, their experience mean something. When they come to Canada, we all know, lots of regulatory bodies are under provincial jurisdiction. So there is suddenly a gap there in terms of their understanding of the Canadian government, particularly with people who come from countries where there is usually one level of government that makes all the decisions. And in Canada we have a very democratic society, so we have different levels of government and different levels of decision-making.

That, on its own, creates an expectation and understanding that is not really real compared with the actual situation in Canada. The other part is that those credentials have not been assessed properly. In the case of skilled workers, for example, if you're talking about the position of mechanic in Romania, a mechanic in Romania is not a mechanic, he is a millwright, but he get points as a mechanic. They come here, but they're millwrights, so we have a huge gap between their skills and what's being assessed here. It's not just the point system or the understanding of credentials. It's important that we incorporate that within our recruitment process, which is our point system.

The other side of it is the whole notion of a skilled worker. In many areas we really need unskilled workers. We need a simple plain labour force. Those are the people who cannot get through to come to Canada, as much as we need them, because the point system is prohibitive for them to be able to come.

These are some of the things that definitely should be looked at when we are looking at the point system.

In terms of the undocumented workforce, I'm sure my colleagues have more experience, particularly Fariborz.

Maybe you can respond to that.

• (0950)

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** Going back to the first point, I think the question you're raising is that every country did receive immigrants. I think it's a global competition, obviously, and I don't think that magic bullet exists. It doesn't matter which country...to bring them here and right away they integrate and they become full participants. I think the key is how we manage when people come here. Currently what we are doing, basically, is we are recruiting people based on human capital. Yes, we need the mechanic here, or the plumbers. The problem is the countries that produce immigrants. If you look at the top ten countries that produce immigrants, I think the wisdom is the plumber is maybe a good plumber in India but may not be able to function in this very knowledge-based society. I think immigration has moved into recruiting based on human capital.

I think what we have not been doing very well is this. When people come here, we are very confident that they bring all this human capital, they're highly educated, and they are willing to do

other things than their specific work. The problem we are facing, I think, is not maximizing the potential of these people coming to this country, because we have not been able to provide enough opportunity for them to transfer their other skills. There are many, many programs that we do across the country quite successfully. For instance, we have millwright or electrician programs, but when you go to the classroom, 80% of them are engineers. We get 30,000 engineers coming to this country, and the reality is, we may have only 5,000 jobs for those people. The key is the partnership or understanding that people come here with the skills and try to transfer them and make use of those skills.

**The Chair:** Madam Faille, go ahead, please.

[Translation]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** I'd like to welcome Stephan Reichhold here today. It's a pleasure to welcome you to the committee. The work you do with immigrants is remarkable.

In Quebec, the Canada-Quebec Agreement applies to immigrant settlement. I would like you to describe to us the impact of the growing percentage of young people. This aspect of the question must be examined; it's becoming more and more important. We can see it in our offices. People who apply for permanent residency or who request a work permit are often accompanied by young children. When they decide to remain in Quebec, their children have learned to speak French with other Quebec children or in day care.

Is this problem one that is unique to a particular province? Has Quebec gone forward in its treatment of young immigrants?

As for the other participants today, what steps have you taken with the federal government? You have surely met certain officials from Citizenship and Immigration. I certainly hope that the federal government didn't dismiss your request and that you were provided guidance. Could you describe for us some of the progress that has been made with Citizenship and Immigration?

• (0955)

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold:** I can try to answer that. The Canada-Quebec Agreement gives Quebec power over all aspects surrounding the reception and integration of immigrants and also provides for a generous financial compensation. Unfortunately, we are in approximately the same situation as the other provinces. Our immigration and linguistic services budgets have been frozen for the past three or four years, even though the sums provided by the Agreement have increased over the last three years from 156 million to 197 million dollars. By way of indexation, Quebec has received 30 million more dollars during the last three years but we have seen no increase in services during that time. That is the situation right now.

The problem of immigrant youth, and this is becoming more and more evident, is a serious one. There are very few resources and measures available to organizations. As Chris pointed out, our services are mainly aimed at adult immigrants inasmuch as language, support, integration, and employment-seeking services are concerned and very few services are designed specifically for young people. The language question is perhaps less of a problem because they go to school and learn the language rather quickly although in the regions, there are some problems with language courses given in schools outside Montreal. The linguistic question is therefore less of a problem for young people.

On the other hand, young immigrants are faced with various problems including integration within the school, dropping out, poverty and family conflicts et there are no services for them. They fall between the cracks whether it be with social services, the Department of Education or the Department of Immigration. No one seems to be responsible for exercising leadership. The Department of Education says that Immigration is responsible and the Department of Immigration says that it is not responsible for youth, that the responsibility rests with social services and social services say that the youth are immigrants and that, therefore, they are the responsibility of the Department of Immigration. In the end, no one is responsible. That is basically what we see. Other provinces have approximately the same problem.

It's important that all these institutions apply the same approach, but this is not the case.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madam Faille, you have two minutes left for a supplementary.

**Ms. Meili Faille:** I have no other questions for the others.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** I have a response to the second one. In terms of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the way this actually has come about is that our sector has felt that even though we have grassroots knowledge about the problems and issues and challenges, we also have expertise to offer in terms of solutions. That's the whole concept behind CISSA. We are not here to just identify issues and problems. We are also here to offer our expertise and see how we can deal with those issues, and that has been received very positively by the stakeholders, government departments, and anyone we have talked to.

We have been around as a formal umbrella body about six or seven months, and in this short period of time we have been able to.... Yesterday we met with the minister, Minister Solberg. We had a very good meeting and raised some issues and also provided some suggestions and ideas. Last night we had a meeting with a group of MPs. We are planning to have an MP briefing forum some time in March or April of next year, and we have a constant relationship with Citizenship and Immigration Canada through a committee we have formed, SIJPPC, Settlement and Integration Joint Policy Planning Council. But our work also goes beyond Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Stephan mentioned that we are looking at working with all government departments and all different levels of government. So it is very much a collaborative effort, but in a nutshell we have had a wonderful relationship with Citizenship and Immigration Canada and we have been able to communicate many

of our ideas and some of the solutions that we think could help us through the process.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** Good. Thank you.

That completes the seven minutes.

Mr. Siksay, please.

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

I want to thank the folks from CISSA this morning. I think we've all greeted the formation of this national settlement organization with some celebration because I think it's an important development and one that's going to assist us in our deliberations around citizenship and immigration policy in Canada. So thank you for undertaking this project and for all the work you do in your regional organizations as well.

I want to ask a question, and it might be a little unfair because I think we're all still grappling with the question of the \$1 billion in cuts that were announced yesterday by the federal government. One of the things you've been talking about this morning is youth and children services and one of the things I'm concerned about, as I look at the list of those cuts, is the cuts to Human Resources and Social Development, HRSD, programs around investments for youth employment and workplace skills strategy. I was wondering if you have any sense of the funding that organizations that do settlement work get from other departments, other than Citizenship and Immigration. Is that a major source of program funding for your agencies?

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** I can respond to part of it, and then I'll let Chris talk about the other portion of it.

For the past ten years, as Chris mentioned, our sector has grown and newcomers have come, but the base of the funding has never grown and we have not had a large share of the funding that has been cut. So we haven't been impacted in that way because we never had it to begin with, but that was always a challenge and a problem.

In a nutshell, any cut to programs for youth and children definitely hurts immigrant youth and children in a profound way, because in addition to the regular needs that they have, immigrant children and youth have additional needs as newcomers.

Chris can talk about some of our initiatives to deal with issues of immigrant youth and children.

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** There are other funders, such as United Way of Canada, Community Foundations of Canada, the Vancouver Foundation, and all of these funding agencies have addressed or identified children and youth as a priority. Again when we're looking at, for example, the skilled labour shortage, part of the solution is supporting the immigrant children and youth to be able to academically succeed.

If we don't have adequate supports to support children and youth.... In the context of B.C. as an example, 40% last year were children and youth. Significant numbers of children and youth are coming into the department. Citizenship and Immigration Canada has just identified youth as a priority for the first time. We have huge complex challenges here that speak beyond just the mandate of this committee to the whole issue of social cohesion, Canadian citizenship, civil engagement.

So it would be a tremendous concern for us to see any erosion of supports to prepare immigrant and refugee children and youth for their future.

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** I think the specific answer to your question is that CIC money has always been focused on the adult. There are very few programs designed or funded for youth. Actually the only source of funding we had for youth was through Service Canada, HRSD, the former HRDC.

The announcement.... I don't know exactly where this cut is going to have an impact, but that would be very unfortunate, because HRSD is the only source of funding for programs specifically for immigrant youth. I'm hoping that within the priority they would not eliminate this area, because that would be quite negative.

•(1005)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I wonder if I could ask Chris to say a bit more about the 2004 report card and the findings.

Chris, I know that you were one of the researchers on that project. Have there been any noticeable changes since the report card came out?

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** Since the report card was released in February 2005, we've been seeing a further erosion in the capacity to adequately support immigrants and refugees coming to the country. This translates into increased wait-lists, and there are cuts in adult ESL programming.

As another example in British Columbia, all of the provincial immigrant and refugee service agencies had their current contracts for the provision of adult ESL and settlement services extended by one year, but at a status quo budget going back 18 months, which on average meant a 10% cut in service outputs. Again, this is the erosion of the infrastructure. Agencies across the country are being stretched to provide adequate supports. So that's the background.

Of course in the other context, research done by Metropolis and the department itself points to increased poverty rates, decreased labour market attachment, and an increasing inability to access free French and English-language services, which are key to successful settlement.

I guess the main point from CISSA is that if we are going to increase the levels of immigration, we've got to have the capacity and the infrastructure, and this means smart investment. We've been struggling to provide adequate supports for over a decade with the same level funding. In the meantime, close to two million immigrants and refugees have entered the country.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Could I ask one last quick question?

**The Chair:** Thirty seconds.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Go ahead, Stephan.

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold:** To give you a figure on Quebec, because Quebec is also concerned, the Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities lost 20% of its overall budget in three last years, which gives you the priorities in Quebec.

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** If I might add, one of the pieces I believe is missing across the country is that for a long time, Canadian Heritage was a key funder for many of the programs dealing with youth and some community issues. Canadian Heritage is just not coming to the table now. So I think that's a department that needs to be looked at.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Bill.

Mr. Komarnicki.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly appreciate the members attending here and inviting us to last night's reception. A lot of your work has to do with educating members of government and members of Parliament, so we appreciate the effort you've made and also your appearing before this committee. We look forward to a long-lasting and good and favourable relationship with you.

I noted when we looked at the material that you provided that your research indicates that we will need to have and attract and go out there to actually get more immigrants into our country. All the reports seem to show that this is what's likely to happen. Of course, we need the infrastructure below that to support the people who do come in and to capitalize on their skills and abilities, and we have been somewhat lacking in that area. I appreciate that since 1994 or thereabouts, funding has not been provided for the infrastructure, even though we had a \$975 landed immigrant fee, which could have gone directly to that project but didn't. As you know, we reduced that to half and committed \$307 million, a somewhat significant amount, towards that.

One of the questions I have is whether that type of funding, in your mind, is something that is adequate for giving you the infrastructure you need to meet the existing needs. Or are we playing catch-up with that money? Are we able to go forward with the funds we have, or do we need more funding to get the infrastructure in place? That's a question.

The other aspect I think about, knowing the number of organizations that you represent, is that it's quite a colossal event to get everybody working together. I'm happy to see an umbrella organization that can filter down to the ground where the action really happens. It requires a great deal of partnership, but the funding transfers aren't always the same from province to province. I know that there has been some indication that there should be some conditions attached to the funding transfers that might better nationalize the services across the country. You might want to talk about that intergovernmental transfer and some of the conditions that might be attached to it.

Of course, some provinces add funding to federal transfers, which may cause some differences between provinces and regions. And we'll find that smaller centres—I'm happy to hear not only in the rest of Canada, but in Quebec—find that the services might flow towards the metropolises and not to the smaller centres. So the attraction might not be to have the immigration flow to the areas that perhaps most need it.

How do you deal with all those issues? Do you have some thoughts and solutions?

• (1010)

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** Perhaps I can start.

On the issue of the funding, we have to realize that in the context of close to two million immigrants arriving in the last decade and no funding increase, we now are in catch-up mode. We're trying to ensure that the services we have in place are stable, that we can plan on a more long-term basis, that we don't have to deal with the fluctuations of, for example, the context of B.C., where we had one of the highest increases in almost a decade and yet the whole sector had to deal with a decrease in funding. This is really difficult for agencies on the front line who are trying to provide adequate supports. That would be my comment there.

I think the department recognizes as well that this is a starting point. The \$307 million is extremely positive, and CISSA/ACSEI has come out publicly in support of this funding. But this is a starting point. Again, if we're going to accelerate the number of immigrants who come in, we need to look at what is currently being provided across the country; this suggestion from CISSA/ACSEI the committee may want to entertain as a white paper on comparable services. That would give us a better insight into what's happening in terms of the infrastructure and the current capacity. That way, if we are in general agreement about increasing the numbers, we have the infrastructure to properly support them.

In the case of intergovernmental relations, I think it's really important. This is part of the federal government's enduring role. As you're aware, Quebec, Manitoba, B.C., and Ontario, more recently, have signed provincial-federal agreements on immigration. From CISSA/ACSEI's perspective, again it's about national standards. How do we ensure that there are national standards? How do we ensure that there are comparable services? Are we in agreement that services provided to immigrants and refugees, who are just starting out in this country, should be provided in a free, universal, accessible manner? Those to us are some of the guiding principles and protocols.

Yes, there must be regional differences, regional approaches—we don't doubt that necessity—but the issue is that if we don't have strong national comparable services, strong national standards, and some strong national directive by the federal government, then we're going to get into a situation, as the skill labour shortage heats up, around interprovincial competition.

For instance, the immigrant landing in Manitoba can acquire free, accessible English language skills to a fully functional level. In British Columbia, currently they can only acquire it up to a level three, an upper beginner/lower intermediate; then they have to pay for it.

Is the intent of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration funding to provide universal, free, accessible, quality programming, or is the intent to now introduce fee-for-service programming? With the precedent-setting that has occurred in British Columbia, what does that mean across the country? For example, what does that mean to immigrants who are just starting out, who may not have the financial means, who are desperate to attach to the labour market, and who don't speak one of Canada's official languages?

• (1015)

**The Chair:** That completes the seven-minute round.

We're now going to proceed to our five-minute rounds. Leading off this round is Jim Karygiannis.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Good morning, and thank you for coming.

Over the summer we saw something that we'll have to discuss pretty soon, and that's dual citizenship. There was an instance in Lebanon—I don't have to go into further detail—where we evacuated something like 15,000 people. Just recently there were reports in the press that about half, or 7,000 of them, have gone back. When the reporter was questioned about how he got those figures, the answer was that the external affairs ministry as well as citizenship and immigration officials gave that number of 7,000.

My question to all of you, or to whoever wants to represent the group, is how do you think the people who settle in this country after a little while feel about dual citizenships?

**The Chair:** That's kind of a difficult question—

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** I can only answer—

**The Chair:** —but if you have any comment, that would be fine.

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** —that from my part of the world I'd have to say, because I deal mainly with people who come in as refugees, people who have been forced to leave their countries and have been selected for assistance by the government of Canada, can hardly wait for that four years to pass—and it is almost four years—to take out citizenship. I think it's one of the most encouraging signs I see for the future, that they're there, that they are absolutely committed to make Canada their future, and I don't see any problems. But I'm only dealing with a very small number of people. The situation on the west coast might be entirely different. But citizenship is what everybody aims for.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** My question is how do you feel about dual citizenship?

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** It doesn't give me any problem.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold:** I can answer that. For my part, I'm a German citizen and I have been living in Canada for 17 years. Unfortunately, Germany does not recognize dual citizenship, so I never obtained Canadian citizenship, because I wanted to preserve my German citizenship, for my children etc. I am therefore in a very difficult position, because of German law. So, if Canada adds a second law, I will be in a even tighter spot.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You do have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** I think dual citizenship has its advantages as well. I know with this particular incident, when you look at the numbers—and I think it was in the news—that obviously there is a question in Canada whether we did the right thing, or, if the incident were to happen again, should we spend that money and effort to bring people here only to learn that they will be going back. That is a question that needs to be debated, and I think that's a good experience. But at the same time, I think dual citizenship creates a lot of advantages for Canada. I don't know how we deal with the taxation. I think we need to look at the taxation. I think we have people who came here from Hong Kong, for instance, who have gone back. Or people come here and they go to their country of origin to do work.

I think if we take care of the taxation, we are going to cover the costs that from time to time we have to undertake because of incidents like the Lebanon situation. But overall, I think it would give a leading advantage to Canada to attract people to come here, if those people could also keep their other nationality.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** If I were to seek a consensus, I would say that your organization supports dual citizenship and the trial balloon that the minister is sending up is not something that is appreciated by your members.

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** Overall, I think dual citizenship has a lot of advantages. I think we should not rush into this. We should have more community debate. We should learn about what happens in other countries. Germany is an example; it's not working for Germany. In the end, perhaps it wouldn't work for Canada. An international discussion needs to take place, but locally we have to have a better understanding of the impact if we want to remove dual citizenship. But I personally think there are advantages for Canada.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Forty-five seconds, if anyone else wishes to respond. If not, we will move to Nina Grewal.

• (1020)

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for your time and your presentations.

My question is directed to Chris. You mentioned resettlement funding in your presentation. Could you please make the comparison of all the provinces, how much funding each province receives and why it is different in each province?

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** It's a complex question that is primarily guided by what's called the settlement allocation model that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration has created. That's one of the accompanying documents in our written submission to the standing committee today.

What essentially happens is that the federal government has a sum of funding and then allocates that to the various regions based on the number of immigrants that land in that region, taking into consideration refugee population, official language capacity, and there is a rolling average over three years. It's quite a complex formula that tries to ensure that provinces with fewer numbers of immigrants still have the capacity and infrastructure to continue to provide services but at the same time recognizes—and we could argue whether or not it's adequate—provinces like Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and increasingly Alberta, all of which have been receiving higher numbers of immigrants in the last five years.

Again, the issue is that the formula has been in place for many years and has been redividing the same sum of money and hasn't been working effectively. This is the point we want to make, that the infrastructure is being stretched considerably across the country. Given the immigrant settlement outcomes that we're seeing, there are alarm bells we should all be aware of. Part of that is how to provide adequate supports at the very beginning, to make sure that immigrants have the best possible start when they come to this country.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Thank you very much, mister Chair.

Thank you for your presentation today. It's very gratifying to hear organizations such as yours talking about your concerns. You are often at the very heart of the problem, very close to what is happening in the field. It must be even more difficult, for organizations as your own, to take action in the present political context, that is in the context of a minority government. That must really burden and slow down your structures and interventions.

During your presentation, you mentioned that you recently met the Minister. I'd like to know how the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration reacted to your concerns and needs. Did he show that he was open to these problems? Is he ready to take measures that will enable you to respond to emergency situations? Did he propose an action plan? Have you set a date for future meetings with the Minister to take legislative measures or to respond to your requests in a short period of time?

[*English*]

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** I can characterize the meeting we had yesterday as being very fruitful. We understand that some of the agencies involved in our membership have 40 or 50 years of history, but CISSA was formally formed about six or seven months ago. We are there to just promote ideas that go beyond the different political parties' mandates and ideology. We talk about issues related to immigrants and refugees, and the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees.

The meeting we had yesterday with the minister was fruitful, in the sense that at least we were able to bring to his attention some of the pressing issues that we feel have to be addressed. The minister listened and made some responses. We felt that the meeting was very positive in terms of some of the action. Ultimately we know that things take time, and we will definitely monitor the progress.

On communications, we feel that we have not only opened communications with the minister and his department, but with this group and other groups.

On the outcome, we will have to see. We are very hopeful and positive. That comes from our approach too. We think we are bringing some solutions to issues. I do not believe that when people hear solutions they run away from them. We can bring in more and more people and get results. So we are very positive about the meeting.

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Mr. Jaffer, please.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC):** Okay, thanks, Chair.

Thanks to all our guests here today. I appreciate some of the feedback.

Obviously, we've been hearing similar stuff over the last little while. Recently, being from Edmonton, I had the minister visit over the summer, and we had the chance to travel and see some of the settlement groups and really understand the challenges they're having. Of course they appreciated the new money, but want to make sure it gets down to where it needs to get. How the money's going to flow—they were sharing a lot of details with us.

Very innovative—I admire you guys, because on your limited resources, all your organizations.... I'm amazed at some of the work that's being done, especially in Edmonton with the Mennonite Centre, for instance, and the work they do.

You mentioned, Bridget, the idea of having the Metropolis project look at more effective ways to do research to link up with the settlement groups. I know that's happening in Edmonton, and I'll talk to the director there and see if there's a way they can spread that with the other Metropolis groups, so there is a way they can collaborate more effectively with the settlement, because some of the outcomes there could be very useful for us, but also, obviously, for you.

Chris, you raised some interesting points: the issue of national standards, when immigrants come, whether they be refugees or immigrants, the challenges they face in different provinces. One of the questions I had—I want to play the devil's advocate, because it's an interesting challenge we've been grappling with—how can we spread potential immigrants or refugees to different parts of the country, given that, generally, as you know, they tend to settle in the major centres?

If you look at other areas, whether it's Atlantic Canada or other areas, they're really calling out to get some attention for these immigrants, so I was going to ask, do you see this as potentially a positive thing or a negative thing? If there is healthy competition for certain provinces that want to try to attract immigrants, if they do have lower fees or if they do have better services, is that a way that,

in the end, can create the ability for immigrants to look at other options? As you know, the idea was floated a while ago about tying citizenship to certain regions. There are problems with that. There's a host of other issues. So what would your suggestion be?

I understand the concern that can raise if you have those discrepancies, but could there not be a positive outcome in that capacity for those provinces who want to try to attract people, if they're willing to offer better services? I don't know what your thoughts are on that.

**Mr. Chris Friesen:** Some of the discussions we've had within CISSA speak to the issue of capacity. Going back to Ms. Grewal's question around how funding gets dispersed, right now it's linked to landings, immigrant landings, by and large. But the issue is.... And we face this throughout the country—it's not just Atlantic Canada, it's the smaller centres in the prairie provinces, it's the smaller centres in British Columbia, and it's about looking at how we can take taxpayers' money and have smart money around investing in capacity-building local communities.

Our fear through the competition.... And there are mobility rights under the charter; immigrants can go anywhere. The bottom line, though—and this is the big picture around social cohesion and citizenship—is if one province is offering a higher level of service and support versus another province, what's the end result? On the one hand, competition and quality services, and we can compete with one another, but, ultimately, what's the end result in that process? Is that process going to get us to our collective vision, nation-building of Canadian citizenship?

That's one of the issues we've been grappling with, that there is tremendous innovation going on with the agencies across the country, but again, it's about how we find smart money to enhance what we're doing well, what's working well, create opportunities.

As Reza pointed out, we've only been in existence seven months, but we're already seeing the impact of our work: the ability to come together nationally to look at promising practices, look at things that are working, and so forth. That's the benefit we're seeing in this regard.

This is one of the areas we're seeing. I'm not sure if my colleague from Atlantic Canada—

• (1030)

**The Chair:** Okay, that pretty well completes—

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** May I just respond?

**The Chair:** We've got about 45 seconds here, so go ahead, Bridget, please.

**Ms. Bridget Foster:** Although we've only been in existence six or seven months, we've actually been talking about this organization for 15, 20 years. We're formal now, but we've existed for a very long time.

One point I would like to raise about the population and trying to get people to more rural areas is that it's quite encouraging that the Federation of Municipalities is really buying into this now. Just as Europe wrestled with this a good few years ago, there's a recognition you have to get a buy-in from the community. You can't just put people in a place. You have to let the community think, "This is going to work and this is what we want." Things are beginning to move.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** We have three more questioners. That will take us up to 10:45.

Mr. Siksay is next.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Thank you.

I want to go back to the question of infrastructure around settlement issues. I know that in my home community of Burnaby we've seen a significant change, I think, in where refugees settle in British Columbia. Now the city of Burnaby is getting a significant number of those folks; it's stretching the resources of the community, and it happened without warning. Partly it's related to the cost of housing in the greater Vancouver area and the fact that whereas immigrant communities may have settled closer to the urban core in the past, now it's happening in the suburbs, and Burnaby has certainly felt the pinch.

It has meant that a new health region, for instance, is involved in a lot of the health issues, and that a new school board is involved in a lot of the issues around young people and their education. There's a different city, a different municipal infrastructure, so it's tough right now in Burnaby, certainly, for refugees who are arriving.

Could you comment on suburban centres, the kind of change that seems to have happened, and the kinds of infrastructure problems that have been created? I suspect it's happening in other cities as well.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** In terms of some of the problems, I have to say that we kind of joke about this. We used to say that most of the immigrants and refugees are going to MTV—Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver. Now it's CTV—Calgary, Toronto, Vancouver—and the larger cities have at least some kind of infrastructure that can take the sudden movement of immigrants and refugees.

By the way, these groups have different needs. We kind of lump all immigrants and refugees together, but each refugee group has a different need; immigrants of different categories have different needs.

The problem becomes much bigger for smaller communities. I come from Windsor, for example. Every time there is a sudden movement, even if you get just 200 or 300 extra refugees or immigrants coming to Windsor, it taxes the whole system—taxes it from the schools, which don't have room, to the hospitals. We do not have the infrastructure to be able to absorb high numbers.

It is not only settlement services. There is a Canadian saying that it takes a village to raise a child; it takes a community, as Bridget said, to settle a newcomer. It's not only the settlement services.

When we are talking about building infrastructure, that would be at least the capacity of the settlement services to work with other groups within the municipality and the community to also help them in terms of the settlement integration.

I believe the shock and the stress taxing our systems in smaller communities is much higher than in the bigger communities, even though they get a larger number of people going to those communities.

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** I think one of the issues we saw with the old settlement allocation model was lack of flexibility. They had it for so many years that it was very hard to move it. I think you gave an example of your area, and in Calgary we've moved from 5,000 people coming six or seven years ago to 15,000. Has the funding changed? No—so somebody in Calgary sometimes has to wait six months to go to basic ESL classes. I think we are hoping they'll build flexibility into this new settlement allocation model, so that if suddenly one area gets so many people, as in your example and in the Calgary example, they will be able to do something about it.

In the past, we haven't been able to address it. We have to put that flexibility into our way of doing business and into funding.

• (1035)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Didn't Calgary have the problem of people moving to Calgary after landing in another city first, and that often the model wouldn't account for the fact that they actually were demanding the services in Calgary?

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** Exactly. Again it goes back to the old settlement allocation model. We are hoping to change that, because Canada is changing, obviously, with immigrants.

As well, you have to look at the psychology of people. We are recruiting people who come from cities of 20 million, 10 million. Expecting them to go to a smaller centre is a bit too much to ask. However, we have done some work locally. There are other groups who have been in this country for a few years; they might be a better audience for being encouraged to move to a smaller centre—as some of them are doing, actually.

**The Chair:** Mr. Devolin is next, please.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Good morning, and welcome.

This is an enjoyable conversation that we're having, and I'm certainly learning.

I'd like to follow up on this issue of the challenges that are being faced in the major urban centres versus the challenges that are faced in more rural communities or in other provinces.

Prior to becoming an MP, I worked as a consultant with the Ontario Smart Growth Initiative and we travelled all across Ontario, talking about growth issues. What became very apparent was there were two—I don't want to call them two solitudes—very different experiences.

When you're in Toronto, for example, growth was in your face. Whether you liked it or not, the onslaught was coming and the issue was how do we manage or try to steer it; versus in Sudbury, for example, in northern Ontario, they're dealing with depopulation and youth out-migration, and where do we stand and wave our arms to try to attract more people to come here. So this is not only an issue, as you say, between provinces with large cities, but even within those provinces, B.C. and Ontario.

I also agree with Ms. Foster on the notion that if the municipality decides it wants to go in this direction and it embraces the notion and welcomes people, it's a far better approach than somehow trying to require people to live in places where they don't want to live.

I'm actually wondering if you know of examples where this may work. The question I have is, is there an issue of almost critical mass in a community? For example, if someone's come here from another country, if they go to Toronto or Vancouver they know that they will find people who speak their language, who share their culture, and they can find a grocery store to buy specialty items and they can find a church, whereas if they move into a more rural area they're very much on their own.

Have there been provinces or communities that have actually been proactive in terms of saying we want to bring immigrants in, and rather than just going after one or two people we'll actually try to build a critical mass in our community so that immigrants actually want to come here because they can get some of those services that maybe they think up until now they could only get in large cities? Are there provinces or communities across the country that you think have taken this approach, and does it work?

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** I think not by design, I think by accident it's happened. I can speak of Brooks, for instance; it's a city that attracted almost 5,000 Sudanese. I think in terms of the whole notion of attracting people, the critical mass is identified through the research as one of the issues that can help people to look at those centres if they have some relationship or they have a community they can relate to. Obviously, that has been proven. At least in Alberta we can talk about Brooks as an example. We have thousands of people moving there.

Now people actually come to Calgary knowing that in two days they're going to go to Brooks. So, yes, to answer your question, it works. In Winnipeg I think there was the example of the Filipino community, which has resulted in the expansion of that community as well.

**The Chair:** I'm trying to keep our committee on track here, because at 11 o'clock we do have another committee moving in here and we have the subcommittee report to deal with. In the interest of getting every speaker on—there are only two left who didn't get on, Madam Folco and Blair—could we just cut it there, Barry? It's four minutes. I have to try to get two more people on who never had a chance to speak today.

Thank you, Barry, for your consideration.

Madam Folco.

• (1040)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Thank you, Mr. Devolin. I appreciate your generosity, as usual. Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I very much appreciated last night's meeting non only with yourself, but also with other political party representatives. I think this is the beginning of a good relationship that will involve information-sharing and support, as much for yourself as for us, on ideas and policies.

As it happens, I have two questions to ask concerning policies. First of all, you spoke in some length about problems in the field as well as of budgetary problems with regards to Citizenship and Immigration.

I'd like to ask you about solutions that you would consider. It's always important to hear about possible solutions from people who have a particular problem because most of the time they are the ones who have the right answers.

[*English*]

That would be my first question, and I'm speaking quickly because I'd like to give my colleague time to ask questions as well.

In regard to my second question, I'd like to move the debate to something else, and that has to do with seasonal workers. There is a program with the Canadian government and the provincial governments for getting seasonal workers from Mexico, Russia, and the Caribbean, particularly, but not only, in the rural areas. I think that you certainly know a great deal about this in British Columbia. Ontario is well aware of this, and Quebec is well aware of this. But I'd like to hear from you on whether you would in particular support such a program in the Atlantic provinces that are in need of seasonal workers, from what I understand.

[*Translation*]

My first question has to do with policy elements that you could suggest.

Thank you.

**Mr. Stephan Reichhold:** As for the first question, we told the Minister that one of the bigger problems we encountered in every province is the fact that different institutions and Departments are functional silos. You know that the integration of refugees and immigrants is important for everyone. It has to do with schools, hospitals etc. But Departments don't communicate with each other. This is the situation in Quebec and everywhere. I think we need a horizontal and cross-functional approach. The responsibility for the integration of immigrants does not rest solely with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration but also with Human Resources Canada, the Department of Health, and the Department of Justice. These people need to talk to each other, which is not the case right now.

[*English*]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** Is there anybody else?

**Mr. Fariborz Birjandian:** I think this is happening quite a lot in Alberta because of the urgent need that the business community has for seasonal workers. But again, and you can do the research, it's not really the ultimate solution. I think you have a lot of countries, even some of the developing countries, such as Dubai and Libya, that have been using temporary workers as a solution, but they have not really capitalized on all of the resources that come into the countries. Although that is acceptable in the short term, I think we should have a longer-term plan to address the issue.

Also on that particular note, because I've been involved in a few issues, we have to develop a very clear policy on how we will treat these people. We have some issues and the issues are quite sensitive. I think we have to pay attention to the fact that once they come here, they need to at least have a place to go to when they have problems. They are currently quite afraid to raise issues if they have issues with employers.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** If I could reply, Mr. Birjandian, I totally agree with what you're saying. Those are kind of phase two and phase three, if you like. I wanted to hear from you on whether you were interested in enlarging phase one, given that we absolutely want to look at some of the other things you have suggested.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, and that will complete the five minutes, if anyone has any comment on what Madam Folco had to say.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** Quickly, in terms of immigration and the way we feel about nation-building, nation-building is when people come and have vested interests in the future of this country. If you're talking about seasonal workers, that may again address some of the needs of companies and businesses.

I'm hesitant to give a personal opinion that would help us in terms of our nation-building. I think there are areas we have to be concerned about.

• (1045)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Folco.

I will now go to Blair Wilson.

**Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the good work you do and for the brief you've provided to us.

I represent a half-urban and half-rural riding in British Columbia, West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. As you mentioned in your brief, Canada has strong ties with other countries. In British Columbia, we definitely have strong ties and a good relationship with people from China, Korea, India, and Japan.

At the same time, we have an economy in British Columbia that is booming in all sectors, in construction, biotech, and high-tech. As you outlined in your brief, we have a major skill shortage in B.C. When you combine that with the aging population in Canada and the low birth rate, we've got to do something to create a new population policy.

The question I have is quite straightforward. In previous governments, we had set a target of 225,000 to 250,000 new Canadians a year. Last year Canada let in 262,000, which I think is a good start, but it's far from where it needs to be.

I was recently in Vancouver with Mr. Ignatieff, who was talking about a new number of 350,000 new Canadians, which I concur with. I think the present minority Conservative government is looking to pull those numbers back down from 260,000 to 225,000, which is only going to cause major disturbances in the economies of British Columbia.

My question to you is this. What types of immigration targets and population policies would you recommend for Canada?

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** I think we'll leave the numbers to those who can predict demographic and labour market shortages and those things.

What you're saying is that regardless of the number being brought to Canada, they have to have proper services. We have to have the means not only to integrate them into our society and our labour markets but also to make sure we utilize the skills they're bringing. We can bring half a million and not utilize 100,000 of them or we can bring 200,000 and utilize all the expertise and experience they bring.

I think it's a question of how best we use those we bring here, and how best we can integrate them into our Canadian society.

In terms of the numbers, we have heard the numbers. We have heard 1% of the population. The Liberal government talked about it. I'm sure the Conservatives have also been looking at it. But really the whole issue is how best we use what we are bringing here. I think that's what we talked about: the smart funding, the smart money, and the outcomes. It's not just about the numbers, even though those are important issues that we have to deal with.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I want to thank all of you for coming here today to testify before the committee. I'm very well aware of the important work you do. Bridget Foster, back in my neck of the woods, never neglects to keep these issues front and centre. I want to thank you, in particular, Bridget.

Thank you. It's been very interesting. I wish we had more time to pursue all of the questions that people have to ask, but in the interests of time we have to move on. Again, thank you.

**Mr. Reza Shahbazi:** We appreciate the opportunity, and we are very much looking forward to continuing our work with this standing committee.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have only ten minutes or so. It's too bad there is a committee waiting to come here to begin their committee meeting, because generally we can go a little bit over in our committee meetings.

We do have the second report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. We had our subcommittee meeting about a week ago, and I believe all of you have a copy of the agenda. I want to indicate to you that this agenda is not written in stone. You can amend it if you wish to and talk about it a little bit.

Normally this is an important issue. I would postpone it until Thursday, but the clerk has indicated to me that it's necessary to deal with some of it, given the fact that he has to contact witnesses to come here.

So I present to you the second report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure. We're down to Thursday, September 28. We will talk about Bill C-14 at that time. But let's talk about the parts from Thursday up until October 26. Do we have any comments from anyone on the agenda?

Jim, go ahead, please.

•(1050)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, nowhere in the proposed agenda do we see that the minister will be coming in front of this committee to tell us where he sees the department going, what changes he wants, and certainly what changes are being trial-ballooned for citizenship.

It's nice to go to the press and be able to throw something out there. I'm just wondering, since the parliamentary secretary is here, whether he would undertake to ask the minister to come to our committee. I'm sure all the members of the committee would certainly agree that getting the minister here would be, not only for this issue, but for other issues, a welcome exercise. I'm just wondering if the parliamentary secretary would agree to undertake that on behalf of our committee.

**The Chair:** We will have an opportunity to meet with the minister. I believe it was mentioned in our subcommittee meeting that the minister will be presenting his supplementary estimates, so he'll be coming before our committee fairly soon, Jim.

I don't know when the supplementary estimates are going to be tabled.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I'm not talking about supplementary estimates.

I'm sure the parliamentary secretary will certainly undertake on behalf of our committee to ask the minister to come in front of us. Besides hearing about the supplementary estimates, we would like to see and certainly ask the minister where he wants to go, where he sees the department going, and what it all means, beyond throwing out trial balloons.

I think it's incumbent upon the minister to come to our committee and certainly to tell us where he's going and to have that put on the record.

**The Chair:** We can certainly put that request to the parliamentary secretary to put to the minister.

The minister has been before the committee presenting the division of his department on two occasions, I believe. I don't know if that's enough before we get the supplementary estimates. In any event, I will hear from the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Certainly I hear what you're saying, and I'll take your message to the minister. He has appeared before this committee on two occasions, and certainly was put to the test by no one other than Mr. Andrew Telegdi and others. I think you missed that meeting, or weren't there on perhaps that occasion or on the subsequent occasion when he outlined his views. Certainly when estimates come forward the opportunity will be there for you to deal with some of the specific issues you may have in mind.

Having said that, and depending on when that comes before the committee, I'm certainly willing to talk to the minister to see whether some accommodation can be made. My sense is that he appeared twice, he will appear again, and certainly you'll have all the opportunity on that occasion to ask whatever questions you may want. In that context, I will certainly talk to the minister.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I have to maybe bring that discussion to a close, because that's not part of our subcommittee report. I really have to deal with the subcommittee report.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, the subcommittee was discussed before you were elected as chair. Going back to that, I think there are issues that have sort of cropped up over the summer, certainly issues that affect this committee and the work of this committee. I'm sure that if you were to canvass us, the majority of us around this table would certainly want to get the minister in our midst as soon as possible. If the minister doesn't want to come, I'm just wondering if the parliamentary secretary can share with us if there's a hidden agenda in the department.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** I don't know if I can respond to that, but I can tell you, if you listen to the tone of my response, that certainly that isn't the context in which your question was taken. I can assure you that there is no hidden agenda. I will certainly put your views forward and get a response to you, but you have to take it in the context of everything that is happening before this committee. We'll get back to you.

**The Chair:** Okay. I would ask....

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Obviously the agenda itself may have some issues that we'd like to take some issue with, as well.

**The Chair:** Again, I would ask that we get on to the subcommittee report. All we're really interested in here....

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I was just wondering if you want to canvass the committee to see how many of us really want to see the minister here. Let's not dance around that issue. Canvass the committee to see how many of us want to see the minister in front of us to address the issues that have happened recently and the trial balloons that are out there.

•(1055)

**The Chair:** Is that the wish of the committee?

Bill.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Chair, I just want to say that the planning committee did discuss the appearance of the minister. We decided very explicitly that we expect him to come, as he always has at the time of the supplementary estimates, and we will have a wide-ranging discussion then, as we always do. We do appreciate that he has been here twice in this Parliament already, in the short time that we have been around. I think that we've had great cooperation from the minister, and I want to express my appreciation to him. I don't share Mr. Karygiannis's hidden agenda issue and that kind of stuff.

If you need a mover for this proposed agenda, I'd so move. Just to let folks know, there are a number of other issues that we are going to work on as an agenda and planning committee to fill in the rest of the fall session.

**The Chair:** So it is agreed by the committee that we will wait until the minister presents supplementary estimates, fairly soon, and bring them before the committee, at which time, of course, we will have a very wide-ranging debate and two hours to talk to the minister on these issues.

Madame Folco.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** This is exactly the point I'd like to raise, Mr. Chair.

I understand that the supplementary estimates will be presented to the House before Christmas. That's what I see missing from this second report.

**The Chair:** The supplementary estimates will be in October, actually.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** All right.

The subcommittee's report goes up to November 2. Although I appreciate that we do not know what day the minister will be free to come and meet us, I would have expected that somewhere on that agenda there would have been—let's put it this way—a blank, saying somewhere that there will be a visit from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to talk about the supplementary estimates. I'm really disappointed to see that the agenda is completely full, twice a week, up to November 2, without having a blank space somewhere to give us that visit from the minister.

**The Chair:** Obviously the subcommittee report is a very important issue. People want to discuss it a little longer than the time we have available to us today.

Could I ask the committee to give us permission for the Tuesday and Thursday meetings—Tuesday on refugee issues, the Canadian Council for Refugees? Of course, the clerk needs permission now on

this in order to give him some leeway to contact the various witnesses, and what have you. Then on Thursday we will presumably have more time to discuss this subcommittee agenda and your request, Mr. Karygiannis.

Could we have permission for Tuesday and Thursday's agenda on the subcommittee report?

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Is it September 26 and September 28, or September 28 and October 3?

**The Chair:** The meetings will be on October 3 and October 5. Then we'll discuss the subcommittee agenda at our next meeting.

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, it's not clear to me exactly what you're proposing.

**The Chair:** We're looking at meeting on Tuesday, October 3, and Thursday, October 5, on the subcommittee report on refugee issues. It's to give the committee permission to call these witnesses on refugee issues for October 3 and October 5. On October 5, we will also talk about the subcommittee agenda.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Point of order. Is there not a motion on the floor to accept this agenda? Why don't we just vote on it?

**The Chair:** I was given the impression by a lot of members that they wanted to talk about the agenda and probably amend certain parts of it—add to it, delete from it, and what have you. I don't perceive that we have time to do that.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** We can revisit the agenda a week from now and choose it if we want to. If we pass the motion to accept this agenda, that gives the clerk the green light to go ahead and invite the witnesses next week, doesn't it?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** I so move.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** I take it that Mr. Komarnicki or the Conservative Party certainly do not want the minister to appear before us. I'm just wondering what the hidden agenda is here.

● (1100)

**Ms. Raymonde Folco:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

You moved very fast and I wasn't able to ask for a nominal vote. I would like to have a nominal vote, because it's not clear to me who's in favour and what we are in favour of.

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

**The Chair:** I think we have a consensus. We'll meet again on Thursday, October 5. Thank you.

The meeting is adjourned.





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