



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

CIMM • NUMBER 039 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Chair

Mr. David Tilson

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● (0900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC)):
Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

This is the 39th meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on Tuesday, December 8, 2009, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a study of best practices in settlement services.

We have five groups here this morning, which is the most we've had for some time.

I want to thank you all for coming. As is customary, we're going to give you up to 10 minutes for each group—not for each person, or we'll never leave here—which will get us to around 10 o'clock, and then members of the committee may have some questions for you.

Members, because of the large number of groups this morning, each caucus will have only five minutes for questions.

I'm going to ask you to introduce yourselves.

I'll start with the Langley Community Services Society program manager, Sandy Shih.

You have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Sandy Shih (Program Manager, Langley Community Services Society): Thank you.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Sandy and I'm the Program Manager for Multicultural and Immigrant Services of the Langley Community Services Society.

I am a first generation immigrant in Canada. I was like an elementary school student when I arrived in Canada in 1996. I have learned English and a new culture here, even though at times I felt like I was learning how to cross a street. As you can see from my immigrant story, people believe that Canada is the best place, where everyone's dreams can come true.

The purpose of the program is to assist and support new immigrants and refugees in a smooth transition to settlement in the Langley area. We help clients with their problems in filling out forms and applications, in five different languages: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and for the Karen refugees. In our program, only the Karen settlement worker and I are full-time staff. The other workers work part time only.

We provide orientation to newcomers, such as information on housing, banking, transportation, schools, and family doctors. We help clients apply for their SIN card, MSP premium assistance, child care subsidy, and EI, and we also help them to renew their PR card or apply for citizenship and/or a passport.

We offer citizenship classes in Mandarin.

We do referrals to free English classes, ELSA. In the Langley area, the only ELSA provider is New Directions. They impart the ELSA program, but only levels one, two and three. If newcomers need level four or five, they have to go to other cities, such as Surrey or Abbotsford.

It's very inconvenient for them to travel to other cities to get the ELSA program, so we provide ESL services in our agency. For new immigrants, the biggest problem is the language barrier. We have beginner, upper beginner, intermediate, and upper intermediate ESL classes. We also have conversation, reading, and advanced classes, as well as a Korean children's class.

There are five support groups in our programs, covering the Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Karen refugees who access our offices. There are one or two seminars or workshops every month to help them get more information so they can go about their daily lives.

● (0905)

Our buddy program promotes cultural understanding between Langley residents and immigrants and also provides an opportunity for newcomers to learn more about Canadian society, culture, and history.

We provide income tax services to our new immigrants and low-income families. Every year we send volunteers who speak different languages to the Canada Revenue Agency to get more income-tax training and to get the software from CRA.

Before I moved to Canada, I was a computer systems analyst for an IT department at the Taiwan national revenue agency. I worked there for more than 13 years. I know that all of our settlement workers had to renew their knowledge of the income tax information. We understand that income tax services are very important to our clients, who came from different countries with different tax systems. We served 420 clients last year in the two months of March and April.

For social activities and recreation, we have tai chi, tai chi sword, chi kung, and international folk dancing classes, which are very popular recreation classes for new immigrants. We encourage newcomers to attend community activities like Langley's International Festival, the East Indian Diwali Festival, the Baha'i Festival, and our Multicultural Lunar New Year.

We also have a good relationship with community leaders. For example, I am the current president of the Fraser Valley Taiwanese Association.

We provide interpretation and translation services to immigrants and third parties like Langley's Douglas Recreation Centre, the Langley School District, employment services, Service Canada, and the Christmas bureau).

For immigrant employment services, we provide orientation and seminars, help clients write resumes and cover letters, or refer them to Langley community employment services, but there are only English services in Langley.

The Safe Harbour program is a provincial program funded by the B.C. government. Our tag line for Safe Harbour, "Respect for All", includes all segments of a population that is rich with diversity.

On Karen refugee services, there are 55 families or 350 individual Karen refugees from Burma who have been living in Langley since last year in the apartments just across the street from our agency. For Karen people, language is the biggest barrier, along with long-term diseases, transportation, and job searches. Some families still do not have a family doctor. They need an outreach worker to help them with translations and interpretation.

We have only one Karen settlement worker, who helps by providing basic life skills workshops for the Karen community. With their limited English, it's very hard for Karen people to find a job. Most of the job offers they receive are due to connections, volunteering, and shortcuts. They need skills training and long-term jobs.

We have another project for children from zero to six years, the early years refugee pilot project, which provides intensive early childhood development support as well as orientation and assistance in settlement.

We have a new one-year project that started at the end of September and is called the senior immigrants and refugees program. We offer seniors information workshops on H1N1, old age security pensions, health and wellness, cultural celebrations, and individual support and referral. The program is delivered in five cities in Greater Vancouver: Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford, Mission, and Maple Ridge. Langley's is the only agency to provide senior immigrant and refugee services. We offered more than 10 activities in the two months of October and November.

Today, I have to say thank you to my supervisor and our executive director, Bill Dartnell, and to the two mayors, Mr. Fassbender, from the City of Langley, and Mr. Green, from the Township of Langley. I always got a lot of support from them. I'm very appreciative of all the settlement workers. Not only do they have settlement knowledge, but they also work with passion and consideration.

●(0910)

The Chair: Ms. Shih, you have up to one minute.

Ms. Sandy Shih: That's okay. I'm finished. Thank you.

The Chair: You're finished? I hope I didn't throw you off.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

The next presentation is from the Centre of Integration for African Canadians. Paul Mulangu is the Executive Director and Patricia Whittaker is the Program Director.

Welcome to both of you. You have up to 10 minutes. Thank you for coming.

Ms. Patricia Whittaker (Program Director, Centre of Integration for African Immigrants): Good morning. I'm Patricia Whittaker. I just have a correction. It's the Centre of Integration for African Immigrants.

The Chair: Oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. Patricia Whittaker: That's quite okay.

I'm the program director at the centre. The funding we receive is through the employment assistance services program, which is under the Ministry of Housing and Social Development. We're located in New Westminster, British Columbia.

I found it challenging to talk about best practices, because there are so many issues that our clients have to go through before we can actually get to a ground-base of being able to say that we have established best practices. However, I'll start with what does not work.

The centre is funded not for settlement services, but to provide job search workshops for clients. However, we know fundamentally that in order for a client to come in and feel settled enough to start looking for work, there are other fundamentals in that client's life that need to be addressed. These are such things as languages, housing, education, and legal help.

Many of our clients are refugees coming from refugee camps. Many of these are families whose kids have never been in a formal education system, yet when they arrive in Canada, they are placed in the education system based on age, not scholastic ability. Many of them don't speak English, so basically this system is setting them up for failure. If a 13-year-old arrives in Canada and is placed in grade 8, let's say, with no language skills, naturally we can see what's going to happen.

We find that many of our clients are traumatized after coming from what are perhaps war-torn areas, and therefore, again, they're not settled enough to find work. We, not being funded for settlement services, have to work with them to find legal help and to find organizations that can help them deal with the trauma from which they have just arrived.

Again, these are things that we're not funded for.

Among a few things that work, one is the ability to have staff present who speak the languages of the clients whom we serve. We currently have nine staff members. I speak some French and Spanish. I have staff who speak Arabic and Swahili. I also have my colleague, Paul, who speaks approximately 11 other African languages. When we first started, our clients were primarily from Africa. Now we see everyone—Chinese, Russian, Korean, you name it, they all come.

The reason why they come to our services versus any others is primarily because they say they feel very much at home. This is one of the things that we feel is very important in settlement services: the ability to self-identify, to be able to access services from people who fundamentally understand your values, who look like you, in many instances, and who can speak the language of the service that you're demanding. I'll now pass it over to Paul.

• (0915)

Mr. Paul Mulangu (Executive Director, Centre of Integration for African Immigrants): To demonstrate about devolution and also what it meant to come to Canada, at the time I came here, I just had this bag. They said, "This bag is green" and "What colour is the big bag?" The green is the bag or the green is the material or the green is what...? A lot of immigrants come to Canada without really knowing what the nature is of a lot of the language here.

The resettlement programs come with a problem of devolution. Devolution is the federal government dumping money on a provincial government. In British Columbia, everything is ethnic; now, if you are a small community, you don't have access to the funding under resettlement counselling. When resettlement counselling comes to a community... If somebody comes to this country, where he goes is into the community, to find trust, because that community can tell him where to go. Also, there is the language. It is not only that people at the centres speak French, but how, because there are so many different kinds of French: Quebec French, Parisian French, African French, Congolese French, and Cameroon French, all of them. We need to decode, to tell the person what is the meaning of a lot of things so he can integrate in Canada.

An example is Canadian experience. You come to Canada and they ask you, "Do you have Canadian experience?" I don't have a job. How can I have Canadian experience? That's why I demonstrated this bag to you, to say that a lot of things about the time... They can explain to you about how to go and volunteer. Now, how are you going to volunteer and pay your rent? Some of us, like me, came from a refugee camp to Canada. I owe the money for transportation. Now, with the time I use to go to volunteer, how am I going to repay the money for transportation?

There are all those kinds of things. It's where the bad practice is. This is how I demonstrate the downloading of this resettlement money to the community, because if the money goes to the community, there's a resettlement counsellor there, and at least they understand that they can go to the big communities. If the small communities have no funding, there's no knowledge like in the big communities, and, for a lot of people, failure.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thanks to both of you.

The next group is from PROMIS, PROMotion-intégration-Société nouvelle.

Andrée Ménard and Moussa Guene, thank you for coming. The two of you have up to 10 minutes to speak.

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard (General Director, PROMIS (PROMotion-intégration-Société nouvelle)): Thank you.

Good morning. Thank you for your invitation. We come from Quebec, therefore we will be presenting in French. Is that okay?

Our organization provides support for the integration of refugees and immigrants and advocates for their rights, in the context of social development. I myself lived in Japan for 25 years and I thought I would live there my whole life. I loved that country and I had integrated into another culture. I am from Montreal. When I came back to Quebec I observed that it was a cultural mosaic. I thought to myself that the whole world was in my backyard and that together we should be building a society. Our organization is 20 years old. Last year, 8,000 individuals used one of our services and participated in one or more of our activities. Our centre provides services in 16 languages by very devoted, qualified and professional individuals. We are very passionate and we want to build a society with people from everywhere.

Immigrants experience the difficulties that come with arriving in a new country. Language isn't always a barrier but it can be for some. However, isolation affects all of them. Poverty, and difficulty in finding a job in one's field are also very common problems. Over the years we have developed a holistic approach. I think that is what makes us unique. In order for people to be able to settle, help has to be provided to the father, the mother, and the children. Everyone has to be taken care of in Quebec.

In Quebec, we have classes for newcomers. They're not perfect but they can help children and students learn another language. They can take courses. It's not easy but it's very useful. We also have front-line services. These individuals have to be informed about public institutions and how these things function here. They also have to learn how our social systems work. They have to learn French, of course, and the history of Canada or Quebec, if they settle in Quebec. They also have to become familiar with the manners and customs of their new society. Several require translation, accompaniment and all the other services that have already been referred to. Ultimately, these people cannot become integrated if they can't find a job in their professional area. This situation is truly not easy.

We are very involved at all those levels. Our program is called an integrated program. There are three sectors. The integration sector includes an accompaniment program for newcomers. A file is opened for the individual and we determine what their needs are. We then direct them towards the resources they require, whether it be within our own organization or elsewhere. For this to work, we work with many other people. We need to work with partners because our services are complementary. We always find an answer to a need.

We also provide group activities, various sources of information, and information sessions. Some of these support integration and settlement, and others target adapting to the workplace. I brought you an activity report. I also have documents that I can leave with the clerk. You can read them if you're interested.

We need to offer more than a welcome and settlement program because these individuals face many other problems. That is why we offer a family support program, which is delivered by one paid employee and volunteers who speak many languages. We delve deeper into the problems these people face. First of all, we provide moral support. All those who work in the area of integration know that this is extremely important. Everyone offers this type of support but this sector focuses on it even more so. We go to the heart of the problems. We may go into these people's homes, to help the grandfathers, the grandmothers, the children, everyone.

We feel that volunteering is truly a way of becoming integrated into a society. On average we have about 300 volunteers and half of them are newcomers. Volunteering helps direct them to jobs. Of course, it does not pay the rent, as a previous speaker pointed out, but it does give access to a network. It can be one's first work experience. In Quebec, a volunteer can get letters of reference which can be useful when the time comes to meet an employer.

• (0920)

We strongly encourage volunteering for newcomers. We provide many kinds of information and socio-cultural activities to support integration. People need to learn how to have fun and to go out as a family or alone. This is what the integration sector does. We also do group cooking and other activities that support integration.

The employment and regionalization sector provides employment support. The purpose is to provide immigrants with job search support, whether they be from a visible minority or not, whether they have credentials from here or from abroad, from a college or university, and regardless of how long they have been here.

This sector also provides support for helping individuals deal with the problems they have in finding a job that corresponds to their own goals and to the labour market's needs, and helps them learn the basics and keep their jobs.

Our counsellors frequently contact businesses in order to help them understand the value in hiring immigrant labour, who make up a significant pool of potential employees. These are qualified and highly motivated people. I can assure you that it works. We manage to find jobs for 100 people each year and the retention rate is 85%. We need skilled staff to do this. We are fortunate to have a certain amount of stability in this area which is enormously helpful.

In order to succeed in all our endeavours, we need to have a common vision. Our staff has to share a common vision and respect the values that are important. These values are: independence, empowerment, respect for differences, empathy, equality, inclusion, openness, mutual assistance and solidarity. We encourage independence from the very outset.

Within our integration sector we also have a regionalization program for secondary migration, involving people who have already settled in Montreal or are about to.

I will now give the floor to my colleague, Moussa, because he is the one responsible for that sector. I will then speak after him.

• (0925)

Mr. Moussa Guene (Coordinator, Area Employment, Regionalization, PROMIS (PROMotion-intégration-Société nouvelle)): Regionalization involves encouraging newcomers who have been in Quebec for 0 to 5 years to choose a destination other than the greater metropolitan area, that is Montreal, Longueuil and Laval, the former two areas being just outside Montreal. Montreal's diversity makes it one of the 10 most interesting cities in the world.

There is a political will to spread this immigrant wealth throughout the province. There is a program that involves accompanying these individuals into 17 different administrative regions in Quebec and working with other organizations involved in employability, hosting and settlement. There is a lot of talk about employment, which is key, but which is not the only important factor. There are also all the social and integration factors. In order to be able to receive these people successfully, there has to be awareness-raising in their environments.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Sister Andrée Ménard: We could speak for a long time on this. We also help children. Our Saturday school has been acknowledged as being an innovative and exemplary project. We have 160 children and 160 volunteers. There is therefore one person per child. In the area of education, we provide French courses to adults, part-time and full-time, at various levels.

This integrated program meets the needs of the whole family. We have skilled and well-trained staff. Given that immigration levels are increasing, more services have to be provided. We specialize in newcomers. However, 74% of our clientele—

[English]

The Chair: Perhaps you could wind up, please. Thank you.

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: Permanent residents make up 74% of our clientele but we also work with many people who have another status. We need to take care of refugees. I'll leave you on that note. You can ask us questions. Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. You did it.

Thank you for your presentation.

The next group is the Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines Multicultural Centre. With us we have Salvatore Sorrento, the vice-president, English, and Anne Marie Majtenyi, who is the manager of settlement services.

Welcome to both of you. You have up to 10 minutes. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Salvatore Sorrento (Vice-President, English, Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines Multicultural Centre): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Chair, honourable committee members, staff, and ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to proceed directly to three examples of best practices successes at our centre, if I may.

The first would be the delivery of settlement services. This is generally the point of first contact for many of our newcomers. Newcomers often come to us in crisis mode. Staff members deal with issues like separation anxiety, housing, and employment concerns and many others.

Staff are prepared, and they offer services, support, options, and appropriate referrals to programs and to community services/resources once clients' concerns have been assessed in a case-by-case evaluation. Often for our newcomers, meeting with settlement workers is the first step towards successful integration into our community. Oftentimes, after clients have been settled within our community, they have referred to our centre as their first home.

The second example would be the delivery of English as a second language. There is a positive correlation between the level of understanding of the English language and easier integration, acculturation, and acclimatization into our community. Critical survival skills are acquired from reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This makes the transition into the community much easier.

As Paul pointed out, a perfect example is that bag. A newcomer looks at that and sees green, but what does "green" refer to? Is the colour of the bag? Is it another program? What does it mean?

The third example is the production of the Niagara Folk Arts Festival, which is Canada's oldest continuously running heritage festival. It's generally a 17-day celebration that promotes, recognizes, and respects multiculturalism.

There are several highlights to this festival, one being the ambassadors' ball, where multicultural club members choose ambassadors to represent them year round at various events promoting their heritage. I should say that we have approximately 33 multicultural club members affiliated with our centre, so there is a connection there.

We have opening ceremonies and a parade in which where ambassadors and club members can march from our centre to the front steps of city hall—it's a short march—where the opening ceremonies are officially declared.

The third highlight would be the citizenship ceremonies where former clients and newcomers are actually sworn in as new Canadians, which is really a fantastic thing, and that's right at our centre.

The next highlight would be the approximately 26 open houses that are hosted by our club members, again celebrating and promoting multiculturalism through entertainment, traditional cuisine—food is always involved, of course—and artifact displays.

Then there is the final event, culminating in a local venue at the end of the festival.

What better way to demonstrate annually the ultimate settlement and successful integration of no less than 30 different multicultural groups in the area who have called St. Catharines/Niagara home for decades?

I'd like to move directly to programs that are offered at the centre. There are youth host programs, job search workshops, ESL LINC, child-minding services, and settlement services. All of these programs are funded in whole or in part by the federal government and CIC. What the government is providing us is crucial to our centre.

I'm going to go to recommendations and closing remarks.

We recommend to the committee that it implore the government to continue to fund centre programs that help newcomers integrate into St. Catharines/Niagara.

We ask you to please be cognizant of the softer skills programs, such as counselling, emotional support, and life skills training.

We ask the government to continue to respond to the special needs of refugees. Our centre in St. Catharines is located near the largest port of entry for refugees in Canada, the municipality of Fort Erie, which is about a 25-minute automobile drive from our city. Refugees may require more extensive education, training, retraining, and emotional support since many of them have suffered from violence and trauma.

● (0930)

We recommend that the government support professional development for staff to better serve our clients.

The last recommendation is that consideration be given to a program that deals directly with immediate outreach services support and assistance to clients upon arrival in their host community. My understanding is that there is such a program. I believe it's the RAP, for government-sponsored refugees. We're looking at something to serve the newcomers as well.

The federal government, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Department of Canadian Heritage fund more than 90% of our programs. All of our programs assist newcomers to make an easier transition to life in St. Catharines/Niagara, Canada, without the duplication of services at our centre.

At the centre we respect, love, promote, celebrate, and live plurality. The government is doing an outstanding job in supporting programs. Without the support of the federal government and all stakeholders, our centre would not exist.

There's an open invitation to honourable committee members and staff to contact any of our board members or any of our staff after we present today if you require any further information.

Thank you.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation, sir.

The final speaker this morning is Nouredine Belhocine, who is the General Manager of Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud.

You have up to ten minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Mr. Nouredine Belhocine (General Manager, Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I'd like to start by thanking you for having invited us to testify before your committee. I'm very pleased to be here.

I'm going to talk to you about our organization which is located on the south shore of Montreal, in Brossard. We are a community organization made up of approximately 25 people, professionals working full time in the intake and integration of immigrants. Our organization is 35 years old. In fact, we'll soon be celebrating our 35th anniversary over the coming months, and we belong to a network of community organizations that are located in the Greater Montreal area and throughout Quebec. There are organizations involved uniquely with immigration that have been around for a very long time. I think this is a unique characteristic of Quebec, compared to the rest of Canada and to the rest of the world.

The organization's mission is to welcome and support the integration of immigrants, but also to create intercultural bridges. That is the hardest task of course. The third part of our mission is to advocate for immigrants' rights from the day of their arrival, and for their training. Our organization's mission is therefore threefold.

From the very beginning, our organization wanted to provide a type of single window for immigration services. When I say single window, I mean that the organization offers practically all the services that are necessary for newcomers. That involves language training, employment assistance, integration, and social services, as well as other services. Besides these fundamental services, we also create projects. Our organization often operates on a project basis in order to meet, when possible, particular requests or particular needs on the part of our clients, whether they be youth, or immigrant women, to help them, for example, integrate into decision-making networks, decision-making centres. For example, we assist young immigrants, along with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, to find jobs very quickly. We therefore have an enormous number of projects. On average, we have four or five ongoing projects that may be repeated or that may change from year to year.

We are located in the Montreal south shore area which is an area that is receiving more and more immigrants for various reasons. People leave downtown Montreal in order to settle on the outskirts, whether that be the south shore or the north shore. This is a phenomenon that we have observed. Therefore we are feeling more and more pressure because we are the only organization providing general services in our area. We have sister organizations that are more specialized, for example, a small organization that is responsible for the Chinese community or an organization that provides specific activities and deals with immigrants. However, we are the only comprehensive organization that deals specifically with immigration. Obviously, we are starting to feel the pressure of increasing demand and our resources, our means, our expertise and our ability to intervene are not increasing at the same rate as demand. This is a serious problem.

We welcome approximately 2,000 clients per year, approximately 50% of those are new clients and 50% are former clients who continue to use our services for several years, actually. Within those clients, we deal with a specific category, that of state refugees. These clients are more fragile than the others given their migratory background. They come from refugee camps throughout the world. They arrive under emergency circumstances having experienced

very dramatic, rather tragic, situations over the past few years. These clients arrive here, come to see us, and, in partnership with the Government of Quebec, we settle them in the region.

● (0940)

Generally, our clientele is made up firstly of a large group of people of Chinese origin, people from Afghanistan, Latin America and the Middle East, in that order. Our organization finds funding in all kinds of ways, but not enough funding. Our one million dollar yearly budget comes from the Government of Quebec, the federal government and a variety of organizations that support us financially for individual projects. I will come back to the issue of funding but it is a serious problem for organizations that support integration and that have suffered from chronic underfunding for years.

In Quebec and throughout Canada, immigration levels are rising and integration issues are becoming more and more complex. If you look at the issue as a spectrum, as my colleagues pointed out, it is an issue that brings into play other issues of economic integration, employment, family, young people, isolation, etc. Therefore if we are serious about helping individuals integrate as quickly as possible so that immigration becomes a resource and not a problem for society, then we have to rethink funding in order to make these organizations professional organizations and give them the means and the tools to be able to intervene appropriately.

The problems related to immigrants, to the clientele that we deal with, are problems that have already more or less been raised here. First, there are the issues of access—in my view this is fundamental—to public services. Integration cannot happen without public services playing an important role. To the extent that they produce equality, these are the services that grant equality of access to resources and wealth. They also produce meaning. And yet, overall, whether because of language reasons or lack of knowledge about the system, immigrants have very little access to public services, which are, by definition, integrating factors. If immigrants or other sections of a population are excluded from access to public services, then there is a serious problem.

There is also a language training problem. There are government programs to assist people in learning French and English as quickly as possible. However, there is room for improvement. As long as people are not familiar with one language or, ideally, two, they will experience problems in finding work and having access to other resources in our society.

Another serious problem is that of social isolation which was raised earlier. Immigration represents a fracture in a path, in a life. People have broken with the social network they belonged to previously and they have come here to begin a new network. The problem is that if we do not help them quickly create a new network in society, a social network, a network of mutual assistance and well-being, then there is a risk of turning inwards, and of cultural, social and urban ghettos being created. That is a serious problem.

As I already pointed out, we have a holistic approach but we try to help people become independent as quickly as possible, through employment programs and other programs even if those are, of course, insufficient.

• (0945)

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Belhocine, you have one minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Noureddine Belhocine: I will conclude by saying that recently, we have held retreats, days of reflection, at the Maison internationale de la Rive-Sud. We have understood that given the problems related to integration, it might be preferable for an organization such as ours to play a leveraging role with other stakeholders, because everyone has to participate in the integration of immigrants, and rather than be the only ones involved with clients, we have to help others to become involved with these clients. These other groups would be community service networks, and especially, government services.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thanks very much to all of you. You've all given us an excellent summary of the things you do and the problems you have, and you have all made recommendations to the committee.

We'll now have five-minute rounds of questions. We will start with Mrs. Mendes.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all of you.

[Translation]

I'd like to start by welcoming Mr. Belhocine who is the director of the organization where I worked for 15 years. I'm very happy that he has come here today. I would also like to welcome Sister Ménard, whom I've known for a long time. I truly appreciate your appearance here today because I think that immigration is unique in Quebec, compared to other provinces, as it is directly funded by the province.

Sister Ménard, you talked about complementary integration services. I'd like you to expand on that.

How do you see public services as being complementary? Mr. Belhocine also mentioned that settlement organizations can act as a lever to complement services that are available in the host society.

Sister Andrée Ménard: That is very important, that is truly the key to success. And that is why, for example, as soon as students start their French classes, in the very first week, we let them know in several languages about the other services, such as public services that are offered in their neighbourhood, in order that they access them from the very beginning.

As Mr. Belhocine stated, in Quebec we are organized within very tight networks. We are connected to complementary community organizations such as those responsible for housing. There are ministerial/NGO committees for almost all related areas, such as employability, ROSNA for intake and settlement. We are therefore in direct contact with fairly senior people in government in order to be able to discuss problems and find solutions together. We don't always find solutions but at least we have a place where we can talk

about them. It is absolutely essential that from the very outset, newcomers be aware of public services as well as public systems.

Does that answer your question?

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Yes, absolutely, with respect to immigrants per se. However, with respect to public services, officials also need to understand immigration in order to be able to offer appropriate services.

It strikes me that over the years, the profile of immigration has changed. Immigration doesn't always look the same. It doesn't always have the same origins.

As an organization, how can you support and assist with change in public services in order to be able to respond to these new waves of immigration?

Mr. Noureddine Belhocine: That is a very good question because it is at the heart of the issue. With respect to the ability of organizations like our own, it's all very well, they can do a lot, but they can't do everything. It's our institutions that need to integrate the immigrants. They can start by facilitating access.

How can we have a leveraging effect? Obviously, there are two ways of doing this. We respond to demand on the part of public institutions when they are dealing with a clientele they are not familiar with, because not only are they not familiar with the languages and the cultures, but also with the appropriate ways to intervene.

Scientific studies have shown that in order to be able to provide quality public services to an immigrant who does not know the language nor the system, you need one and a half times the amount of time compared to anybody else. However, public investments do not support this.

First, staff do not have an opportunity to acquire intercultural training. Nobody is a specialist in that area but it can be learned. Then the necessary resources have to be provided. With respect to having a leveraging effect, we respond to emergency one-time requests in order to provide a physical presence in these public institutions. We must—and we have started to do this at the Maison internationale—provide intercultural training and diversity management to help these public institutions.

• (0950)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. St-Cyr, you have five minutes.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to all of you for coming today.

I would like to continue on the issue of employment. Ms. Ménard pointed out quite appropriately that in order to integrate, one has to have a job. I am quite concerned about this. The Bloc Québécois undertook consultations on the integration of newcomers into the labour market. We are very concerned by the fact that many of these people, even if they have a very impressive CV, experience problems in obtaining an initial interview in order to make themselves known. We're suggesting putting a little bit of oil in the machine.

Here's the idea that I would like to submit to you. I don't know if you remember but a few years ago, the *Journal de Montréal* undertook an investigation. The same CV was sent to employers, one displaying the name Martin Tremblay and the other, let's say, Ahmad Abdul. The CV was exactly the same. The first name was invited to about 20 interviews and the other, only two or three. We are proposing that in businesses under federal jurisdiction, that have more than 100 employees and that have sufficient human resources services, the practice that is used in Europe be established, that of anonymous CVs. When individuals are selected for interviews, the recruiter only has access to information on the CV that is relevant to that job, in other words training and work experience, but not the name, gender, ethnic origin and so on.

Ms. Ménard, what do you think of this practice? Do you think that would help people to integrate?

Sister Andrée Ménard: I'll give the floor to my colleague who is responsible for employment. However, I think the heart of the problem is that there has to be awareness-raising amongst directors of businesses and of human resources, who are afraid of diversity and who have prejudices. I suggested to the Government of Quebec that officials call businesses in the same way we do. However, as Mr. Belhocine pointed out, we are limited by the resources that we have. We do it and it works. When we call a business and talk about the merits of an immigrant and suggest that they look at their abilities, it works and the business comes back to us and asks for more.

I'll let Mr. Guene respond directly to your question.

Mr. Moussa Guene: I am an optimist. The problem of employment is going to be resolved because of other things that are happening: the population is aging and the birth rate is low. We see things changing more and more in the area of employability as circumstances change. The old attitude was that immigrants steal jobs; today, employers are calling us for labour. The pendulum is swinging in favour of immigrants.

Obviously, there's the problem of recognizing credentials, experience, and various professional bodies. Some sectors and businesses are more close-minded. That is a cultural phenomenon. In Canada, and more specifically in Quebec, employment tends to be generated by family business and regional industries. We know that small- and medium-sized businesses make up most of these industries. There's a whole regional and family culture underpinning these businesses, which is not necessarily open to immigration. It's not that the people aren't open, but they are not familiar with immigration, they have not met immigrants and they do not see them on a regular basis.

What Mr. Belhocine just pointed out is very important, that is that there has to be awareness-raising through diversity management. The problem is not that employers do not want immigrants. Sometimes the issue is how to manage 10 Chinese, 4 Africans and 20 Maghrebians, if there's a problem. It is that kind of management that has to be learned and implemented.

Today, everything is changing with an aging population. It is also important that the employees themselves be supported. If the employer wants to hire immigrants, other employees should not be isolating them. It's not a very ideal situation when an immigrant

individual is eating all alone in his corner. The awareness-raising has to happen through federal or provincial government policies. Why are we receiving immigrants? It's because they represent a solution to our declining birth rate and demographical problems. The public has to understand this.

In Quebec the percentage of immigrants is increasing each year. We are currently receiving 55,000 immigrants per year. Does the public know why we are receiving those 55,000 immigrants? Why are we choosing qualified individuals who, in their own countries, had credentials, knowledge, experience, and expertise? Once again there's a contradiction. These people have to start over, go back to school after 25 years of studies in their own country. We're told that there is a shortage of doctors, yet immigrant doctors cannot practice. The issue of professional bodies also has to be dealt with.

• (0955)

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, but I have to watch the clock.

Ms. Chow, you have up to five minutes.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Thank you.

Andrée, you talked about 74% of the clients. Where are the other 26% from? Are you having trouble dealing with other clients?

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: I have the exact figures—

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow: Just let me finish the question. That's the first one.

Sister Andrée Ménard: Oh. Excuse me.

Ms. Olivia Chow: The funding for the clients you serve is specifically for new immigrants. They cannot be temporary foreign workers or citizens; they wouldn't get any funding. Is that a problem?

Secondly, in terms of children's programs, can you expand a bit more? What do you do with the children when you come in on a Saturday morning?

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: Let us begin with the program itself. We have entered into agreements with four neighbourhood schools, that invest money in the program. There is one volunteer worker for every child. On Saturday mornings, we have 120 children and the same number of volunteers. We have had no difficulties recruiting volunteers. We have had this program since 1988. It has been recognized as being an innovative best practice. The child-tutor relationship really makes all the difference. The tutor becomes a model for the child. We believe that the relationship needs to be developed before addressing the academic component, which then follows naturally. The weekly, one-on-one meetings last one hour and fifteen minutes.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow: What do they do when they come together?

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: They work on resolving the child's most daunting problem. We don't have the children do their homework. We have them use a log book, which is used to create a bond between volunteers and teachers. In it, they write their weekly observations. Our person responsible for service quality reads all of the log books.

We help children learn by using games that were chosen following consultations with specialists, including speech language therapists. We only deal with math and French-language instruction. We have games for children from grade 1 to grade 6, in order to help them overcome difficulties in either math or French.

We also help their younger brothers and sisters. We work with an early learning expert who gives early reading and writing instruction in order to avoid future difficulties. The teachers send us their students who never speak a word of French on the weekends because their parents are allophones—they do not speak French. That way, the children can maintain what they have learned.

As for the younger children, we only take the younger brothers and sisters who come with their parents. One of our staff members creates all sorts of activities with the parents. There is a coffee corner where some parents go with the very young, and a crafts corner for those children who are not ready for proper instruction because they have to overcome repeated setbacks. Therefore, by allowing them to successfully achieve—

• (1000)

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow: Is this done in a school?

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: No, this is done within the organization. That makes all the difference as well. We have the room to do that. Last summer, we organized an educational day camp. The children learned French and math through theatre, sports and science activities. On Saturdays, there is also a science project, but that was developed by researchers from the University of Montreal.

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow: These are new immigrant children, right?

[Translation]

Sister Andrée Ménard: They are not all new immigrant children, but they all attend schools in the neighbourhood. They all come from disadvantaged families. In other sectors, there are highly skilled people, but in the schools, most children who share that experience come from disadvantaged families, and their mothers have little formal education.

Some are new immigrants. Others might have arrived here 10 or 15 years ago, but they do have those needs. In the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, where we are located, there are many immigrant children in the schools. In a school for 400, 500 or 600 students, there might be only four or five “old stock” Quebec youngsters. I noted a little earlier that we have received many people, originally from some 117 countries.

[English]

The Chair: *Merci, madame.*

Mr. Dykstra has up to five minutes.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I thank all of you for coming here this morning. I'll try to be as brief as I can in order to get in as many questions and answers as we can. As you can see, our system is a little tough here. We have some time for presentations, but not a whole lot of time for questions from parties.

Mr. Sorrento, perhaps you could just tell us about the particular challenges that settlement agencies and border communities face. You did mention that Niagara is a border community. Certainly, we take on a host of responsibilities with respect to immigration, more specifically, obviously, with respect to refugees who come across the border. I'm wondering if you could comment on the issues and the particular challenges we face with respect to that issue.

Mr. Salvatore Sorrento: Mr. Dykstra, with your permission, may I refer the question? I don't have the daily practice and we have our settlement services manager of eight years here. I think she would be able to better answer that question, sir.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: That would be great.

Thanks, Anne Marie.

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi (Manager, Settlement Services, Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines Multicultural Centre): Being close to the border and the smaller community, I think there are two aspects to your question, and I think they're different. Being close to Fort Erie means that we see a larger number of refugee claimants at our centre than most of you would see at your centres. That has certain challenges for us because, as you know, we are not funded by CIC to work with refugee claimants. We are funded only to work with convention refugees and landed immigrants, etc.

We receive funding from the province, from the newcomer settlement program of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, to work with the refugee claimants, but that is a challenge, because approximately one-third of our clients are in that category of being refugee claimants either before or just after they've had their hearing with the Immigration and Refugee Board.

That's a bit of a stress on our agency, because refugee claimants are much more high-need than convention refugees and much more high-need than new immigrants. New immigrants who come into the country are usually well prepared and well organized. They need much more limited service than refugees. They come with good English skills. Many come with pre-arranged employment, so they're much readier to go than the refugee claimants.

The refugee claimants often don't have language skills. They don't have knowledge of the culture. We have clients who have absolutely no education, not even grade school education. Working with the refugees is a challenge.

That answers that part of the question.

On the other part of the question about small communities, because we're small communities, we're small agencies. We don't have the kinds of resources that larger agencies have. That's not funding; I feel we are adequately funded for the population that we service. But we don't have resources that larger agencies have for policy work, for example, or for the rigorous types of evaluation that we need to perform in order to justify our receipt of public funds: program evaluations, criteria, and performance monitoring. We don't have these kinds of specialized skills in our organization because we're small, and almost all of us are involved in direct services to our clientele.

I think smaller agencies might need a bit more of the infrastructural support that the larger agencies probably already have because of their size. An example is access to consultants who can work with us to do program evaluation, to do the kind of accountability that's required of agencies that receive public funding. I think that's where the need is in the smaller agencies.

Does that answer your question, Mr. Dykstra?

• (1005)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: That's very helpful. Thank you.

Just recently in Niagara we made an announcement regarding settlement funding to the region. At the time, I had a question for those who work at the region, and I'd like to get your response to that question. In fact, I'd like anyone's response to this question.

How do you feel about the application process for settlement funding? Is it consistent? Does it move along quickly? What could we do to improve it so that it is a very simple and direct process?

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi: We find that it's simple. We have long-term funding now in three-year contracts. It's renewed every three years. The requirements are not overly strenuous. We have to prove that we're providing valuable services, but I don't find the requirements strenuous. I find the process is expedited in a very reasonable manner. I have absolutely no hesitation about the way the application and the granting process is looked after in the Ontario region.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank all the intervenors, our panellists, for today's presentation.

As you know, this committee has brought you here to listen to your best practices because of your expertise. We will then write a report, which will go to the government. I think you understand what I'm saying. It takes a bit of time for things to occur.

With the use of technology, I would imagine that some leadership could emerge from various organizations that deal with immigrant settlement and other immigrant-related issues, and that best practices could be shared.

First of all, is there such a site? Is there such a body that gathers this together—physically or technologically speaking—and would be a place where these best practices are shared? We spend a lot of

time on the Internet now, as you know. I think it allows us to have a great opportunity to pool resources. I know you're stretched to the limit when it comes to financial resources, but I also think that during times... As we here in Parliament have to do as well, we need to turn that \$1 into \$2, if you know what I mean. That multiplier effect has to occur. Technology, in some ways, allows us to do that.

I don't mean this to put stress on your organizations. I know how busy you are. I know what numbers of people you deal with. But I was just wondering if in fact some leadership could emerge, perhaps from this panel itself, to create this type of information network that could alleviate many of the challenges you may be facing as you grapple with some possible best practices that would enhance your own performance.

[Translation]

Mr. Moussa Guene: Of course, we have to be in tune with our time. Technology is very costly. We have all spoken of the underfunding of organizations. To come to that point, additional resources are needed. In Quebec, the approach that has been taken is rather interesting. Various organizations are asking that the information be made available upfront. A guide entitled "Learning about Quebec" is available online. It contains all the information that a future immigrant to Quebec might need, particularly with regard to housing and skills.

However, there is no telephone number: everything is done through the Internet, which is all very well and good, but not all countries are as advanced as Canada, which has implemented a policy to connect Canadian families. PROMIS is looking at developing a portal on best practices, but we still need to define what those are. In dealing with people, we have to adapt our practices to suit their individual needs. We cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Some people have spent 15 years in refugee camps. We take a completely different approach depending on whether we are dealing with an entrepreneur, immigrant investor or foreign-selected graduate.

Is that something we can achieve? Perhaps in terms of awareness-raising and information-sharing. Be that as it may, I believe in a personalized approach much more than in something that applies uniformly to everyone.

• (1010)

[English]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: I perhaps have to be a little bit clearer on this issue. I'm talking about the actual organizations.

You have access to the Internet, right? Let's say that you have posted something on the Internet that Mr. Sorrento may actually find useful, or vice versa. That's all I'm saying. I don't want to create a big technological revolution here. It's very simple.

If you have a thought on an issue, or a challenge that you were able to solve using this model, you would just say, "Listen, I was faced with this case, this challenge, and this is how I solved it". Then it's up to people to say if they could use it or not. I'm not looking for.... That's why I was very careful to tell you that I'm not looking to burden you with a lot of work; it's just a couple of sentences, really.

The Chair: Please answer very quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Noureddine Belhocine: I think I understand where you are getting at.

Indeed, in order to do more with less, we have to do things differently, no? If I am not mistaken, that is the gist of your question: how to optimize existing resources. Basically, what you are proposing can be useful: a kind of technological platform or user-friendly data bank with information on integration and intake services for immigrants to Canada. That is the sense of your question.

We do that somewhat informally when we conduct our own research. At times, we feel the need to see what our colleagues in Ontario or British Columbia are doing. Is that cost effective? It is for us. That is something we do, perhaps not in the way you described.

I myself see the usefulness of your proposal. It is a comparative analysis or benchmarking process consisting in a comparison of same practices across Canada, and that is not a bad thing to be doing. The question is how to operate such a system, how to fund it, how to make it accessible and whether organizations need additional resources to use it. It would be unfortunate if such a system were created but was not being used. Nevertheless, that could indeed be useful.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Thi Lac.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Thank you to everyone for being here with us this morning.

I am indeed pleased to meet people who help new immigrants settle, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. You know that I was one of them a number of years ago.

I was elected in a rural region during a by-election, and most people did not ask me about my party's electoral program, but about my origins and how I integrated into Quebec. You are right when you say that Quebecers want immigrants to integrate into their culture.

I was also elected during a time when much was being said about reasonable and religious accommodation. Those debates received a lot of media coverage. I think that is what has aroused mistrust toward some Quebecers in recent years. I would not say it is racism, but rather a certain mistrust.

Mr. Belhocine, you have talked about language learning among immigrants. I would like to know the proportion of immigrants who learn English compared to those who learn French, within your institution. Do you have any such statistics?

• (1015)

Mr. Noureddine Belhocine: I will be honest with you, I do not have any reliable, accurate statistics. However, speaking from experience, I could tell you that, because of the availability of services offered in Quebec, people tend to begin by learning French, because they live in a francophone society. However, that is not enough. They very quickly realize that only speaking one language is a serious handicap, both in Quebec and elsewhere.

English-language learning services are not available in Quebec, that is they are not publicly funded. Our organization offers English-language courses for a fee. They are open to everyone, including immigrants, but people have to pay for them. Obviously, since the offer is not available, people are naturally inclined to take French-language courses, because they are publicly funded.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: Mr. Guene, you spoke about regionalization, about people who leave Montreal to settle in the suburbs.

Mr. Moussa Guene: Toward rural regions: suburbs are not part of the regionalization process.

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thaï Thi Lac: Very well. We are talking about people who move to all regions in Quebec. In my area, the people who work with immigrants and especially refugees established an organization called La maison de la famille. Quebec families, people who have been established here for many generations, are paired with the families of new immigrants who settle in the region. I would not go as far as to say that they sponsor those families, but they do help them.

You also spoke about the hiring of immigrants. We know that employers in the regions find that immigrants are very able and willing to work. We do not have that problem in our region.

However, you also spoke about the recognition of foreign diplomas. Do you have statistics showing how many years it might take physicians or people who settle here to have their diplomas recognized so that they can practise the occupations for which they were trained?

Mr. Moussa Guene: Much progress has been made in Quebec with regard to the recognition of credentials. To date, the Government of Quebec, and particularly the Department of Immigration, has signed agreements with at least 17 trade associations. There are also what we call fast tracks, or quick access to the professional bodies. Some associations offer courses to candidates who want to sit the exams administered by various professional bodies. That helps. The process can take between six months and a year. The whole thing is quite expensive, and people who fail the exam have to start over and pay again.

With regard to regionalization, in smaller centres and municipalities, people at times might even begin to work. Some employers help them gain a sufficient number of hours of work in order for them to obtain their competency cards, or after having passed the professional exams. The reason for that is because there is a greater labour shortage in the regions.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

We'll go to Mr. Young.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you very much, everyone, for coming here today, some of you from a great distance. We appreciate it very much.

My impression is that you get tremendous value for the money or bang for the buck in the work you do on the front line in assimilating new immigrants and refugees. Congratulations on your work.

My question is for Mrs. Majtenyi, please. I want to follow up on what Mr. Bevilacqua said, because I agree. I get a little concerned when I hear that agencies want to hire consultants. As we saw with eHealth Ontario, they hired consultants and wasted \$600 million, and had nothing to show for it.

I think the best practices model is a great idea, and I'm not sure you have to spend a lot on technology. Couldn't you find ways to share best practices through the mail, through basic e-mail, or by meeting with your colleagues and other agencies on a monthly basis or something like that?

• (1020)

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi: I think there are some technical reporting requirements we would need assistance with. Those can even be provided by CIC itself. For example, it would be for program evaluation, setting measurable objectives, and various kinds of accountability. For that, some technical background is required. I'm certainly not suggesting using consultants within our sector. These would be for the very technical aspects of contract administration, not program delivery. I think program delivery is best delivered by program staff.

In terms of best practices, I think there have been initiatives. For example, OCASI, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, has a long-standing preoccupation with working with the sector to develop best standards.

Mr. Terence Young: These are standards for administration or for—

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi: No. They're standards for service delivery. I'm talking about best practices for service delivery.

Mr. Terence Young: So that is the best place to start, I would think.

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi: The Canadian Council for Refugees also has excellent documentation on best practices on its website.

I think there are two things. On an individual level, agencies need to incorporate best practices in the policy manuals they use for training of staff and for supervision of staff. We have that kind of document at the multicultural centre. It sets out standards of service and has practices that we feel are the best practices we've learned.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you very much.

I have another question, this time for Madam Shih.

You said that you came to Canada in 1996 and you learned English. I'd like to ask you two questions.

First, I'd like you to comment on the supports you received that worked for you. Which ones worked best for you?

Second, we find that relatively few newcomers take advantage of the language training that is available. You would think that everyone would want to. Do you have any comment on why that is?

Also, do you have any comment on the idea of language training vouchers so that people can choose a settlement agency that provides services that may be close to their homes or that better meet their needs in terms of the time of day or the time of the week when they can study English or French?

Ms. Sandy Shih: Thank you for the questions.

First, I will answer the second question on language training. For our agencies, I think it depends on cultural differences. For example, our agency always provides ESL classes in the morning, because in the afternoon, after 2:30, the parents have to pick up their children at school.

But sometimes some people need evening classes because they work during daytime and they have only basic English, people like the Vietnamese and the Karen refugees, who work at mushroom farms or other farms or with construction companies. They don't have time to study in the daytime.

The ELSA program is free ESL, but it's always provided in the morning. I know some Karen people who were enrolled in English in the ELSA program in the evenings, but because they worked in the daytime, they were so tired from working that after a meal they were too tired to make it.

Mr. Terence Young: Yes, of course. Thank you very much.

I wonder if anybody has any comments on the new citizenship guide. Have you seen the new citizenship guide? Does anybody have any comments on that?

Ms. Sandy Shih: I haven't seen the new guide, but I heard about it on TV.

Actually, we provide citizenship classes in Mandarin to help new immigrants pass the citizenship test. If we get the new guide, we will add some parts of it to our Mandarin citizenship class.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Grewal has the final question.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I would like to thank you for the excellent job you are doing in the community. As you know, my time is limited, but my question is short, so that gives you an opportunity to answer it.

How do you go about teaching new Canadians English?

Mr. Paul Mulangu: On teaching English in British Columbia, let me say that large families come here. There can be a single mom with seven kids. Now, if there is no child-minding at the site, for those moms it becomes difficult to go to school, because there is no child-minding and they don't have day care for those kids. That's where we are trying to encourage the best practice of having sports things, where the mom is learning English and the child also is learning something. There, you are encouraging the mom to integrate. If there is none of this, that's where there are difficulties for a lot of people in going to English classes.

Also, in British Columbia a lot of jobs are ethnic jobs. It's like, okay, I'm learning Chinese so it can be easy to work in my community, but it becomes difficult for me to go and learn English.

As well, a lot of courses in British Columbia, like where I went, to VCC, put people in the same class. There are immigrants from Africa who speak French and can decode very well how to speak English, but they don't understand it. They can speak it and they decode their English, *mais* they can't understand it. The Chinese who come here and who have Ph.Ds can write it, but they can't speak it.

But they put all those people in the same class, and after that, they say, "Oh, you pass". There are a lot of Africans who they say have passed, but they can't decode and they can't understand. This is where you're trying to make up the best way for this, to ask for this, and to put people in those classes who are at the same level.

Also, there's a problem in that the ELSA classes go to level four, and there are people who come to Canada and we know they are speaking at level four, but they don't have writing at level four. They're not able to get into those classes.

● (1025)

[Translation]

Mr. Moussa Guene: What you say also applies somewhat to the area of technology. With regard to francization in Quebec, we now have Web-based courses. People are in contact with teachers from the Department of Education. They can begin learning, even before leaving their country of origin. The same is also done in Nova Scotia. That is an example of globalized services. Rather than have people travel long distances, courses are offered by teleconference or Web conference. Those are new technologies that we are implementing in order to reduce expenses, so that we can squeeze twice the value out of a single dollar and give people access to personalized services. Those are new approaches that are being taken and which will become increasingly widespread.

Thank you. I did want to add that piece of information.

Sister Andrée Ménard: I also have something that I would like to add. In Quebec, people from different nationalities and cultures are all evaluated at the same level, within classes of the same level. That is important and makes a real difference. We also work within a network. For example, in our neighbourhood, the people who give French-language courses make sure that they are not all offering the same course level, but are meeting people's needs. We are filling the needs, coming together at each session and offering courses, all of which is coordinated with someone from the department. The difference is that we are part of a network, we can locate the resources in order to meet the needs, and all of the people we help are evaluated. They come from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, but they are at the same level.

Mr. Moussa Guene: In the regions, classes may at times include several levels.

[English]

The Chair: Very briefly, Ms. Majtenyi.

Ms. Anne Marie Majtenyi: Very briefly. The language instruction for newcomers program, which is a CIC program, is a very structured program. There's a LINC assessor in each city or each region who establishes the level of the student coming in.

There are seven levels of LINC and there's a set curriculum. There are benchmarks for passing from one level to the next. Testing is done regularly. Citizenship and Immigration Canada's LINC program is a very effective and structured program. I just wanted to make that point.

The Chair: Very briefly, sir.

Mr. Salvatore Sorrento: We also have a relationship with the local school board. They teach ESL at our centre and in our host and youth host programs. Newcomers get a chance to practise their English with other newcomers and a volunteer. That's another method for how it's done.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (1030)

The Chair: I want to thank you all for coming today. You've made an excellent contribution to the committee as we're studying this subject.

That concludes this part of the meeting. You've done very well.

Ms. Chow, you have a couple of motions that you want to deal with. We're going to start right in with them, so could you move your first motion, please?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Chair, I'll just move these two motions to save you some time.

The Chair: Sure.

Ms. Chow has the floor.

Go ahead, Ms. Chow.

We'll do our best.

Ms. Olivia Chow: All right. I'll just go through them.

The Chair: If they're not here, you'll get them passed—

Ms. Olivia Chow: That's okay. They've been on the agenda for a little while—

The Chair: You've done very well. You've been very patient.

Ms. Olivia Chow: That's right.

The first one is basically an action plan for all the general reports. We could just proceed with that one.

The Chair: All those in favour?

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

The Chair: Next motion, please.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you.

On the second motion, it's a given that we are looking at wait times.

The Chair: It's moved. All those in favour?

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

The Chair: Well done, Ms. Chow.

The meeting is adjourned.

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