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# **Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, November 3, 2011**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki**



## Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** Thank you. We'll bring the meeting to order and under way.

Today we have two witnesses in the first panel: Suzanne Gordon, representing the Government of Ontario; and Cathy Giblin, representing the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta.

Each of you has from five to eight minutes to present. After that we will have questions, with five-minute rounds from each of the parties.

Having said that, I will ask Suzanne Gordon to begin her presentation.

Thank you.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon (Manager, Labour Market Integration Unit, Ontario Bridge Training Program, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Government of Ontario):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and honourable members, for having Ontario here today.

Thank you for the opportunity to present an overview of Ontario's bridge training programs. Immigration is fundamental to Ontario's economic future, and Ontario recognizes the increasingly important role that immigrants will play in the province's economic growth as our labour force continues to age and retire. That's why Ontario invests in a variety of programs that help immigrants gain the skills and tools they need to enter the labour market.

Prior to the Ontario bridge training program in pharmacy, as offered by the University of Toronto, the pass rate on the pharmacy exam was 20% for those who took the exam. Thanks to the Ontario bridge training program in pharmacy, Ontario has raised that pass rate to 90% by funding the start-up of the pharmacy bridge training program. That program offers intensive short-term training. For those who pass the exam, the employment rate is close to 100%.

This is the kind of outcome we're looking for in our bridge training programs and what I want to share with you here today.

The main objective of these programs is to achieve exactly these kinds of results through short-term, intensive, specialized, and sector-specific training and employment services. These programs help internationally trained individuals meet the requirements for licensure and employment in their field without duplicating what

they already know. The programs complement Ontario's employment services and our province's post-secondary education system.

Since 2003, Ontario has invested over \$183 million in more than 240 bridge training programs. These programs have helped over 42,000 internationally trained individuals find work that is in line with their education and experience.

We're looking for two key results with this type of programming.

The first result is for those seeking employment in a regulated profession. We're tracking licensure outcomes and employment outcomes.

The second result is for those seeking work in highly skilled professions that are non-regulated. We want to see employment outcomes and employment at a level commensurate with their skills and education. Getting just any job isn't what we're interested in; it's commensurate employment.

Today I want to talk more about how these programs achieve this type of success. Therefore, it is the who, what, and why of bridge training that I'm going to give you—as fast as I can—and include some recommendations on how we can work on this and move this area forward together.

Let me begin with whom these programs are for. The programs are targeted at a very specialized client group. Participants must have a very high level of English or French language already. To achieve the strongest outcomes in the shortest period of time, participants must have a minimum Canadian level benchmark of seven. In fact, many of our programs are now setting that higher, at Canadian level benchmark eight, which is in line with university requirements for language proficiency.

Participants all have post-secondary education and work experience. These are not international students. Participants must be eligible to work in Ontario. In order to meet the needs of Ontario's labour market and of the participants, citizenship status and employment insurance status are not barriers to participation in Ontario bridge training programs.

What outcomes can we achieve with these programs? Over the years, and in partnership with our service providers, we have defined three categories of bridge training programs that are capable of generating strong licensure and employment results.

The first category—the titles are not very creative, I might add—is called “Getting a License”. Those bridge training programs help skilled internationally trained individuals in regulated professions become registered to practice and get employed in that profession. Here we're tracking licensure and employment rates.

Then there's “Getting a Job”—which also not a very creative title, but it does speak to the purpose. These bridge training programs help highly skilled, internationally trained individuals with international backgrounds in non-regulated but high-skilled occupations, such as finance, IT, or human resources, find commensurate employment. Again, with these programs we're tracking employment and commensurate employment.

Finally, our third category is “Changing Systems” projects. These projects support both licensure and employment outcomes by working with regulatory bodies and with employers, for example, to build a more receptive Ontario labour market, one in which our skilled, professional newcomers can compete effectively for work. Under this category, we have pioneered tools that help employers recruit skilled immigrant professionals and integrate them effectively into their places of work.

● (1540)

Why do these programs get results?

We require our programs to offer a continuum of services from assessment to work force integration strategies. These specialized services are delivered directly or through partnerships with other expert service providers. I have a handout that was shared with the committee. It's a colour handout, and it lists the range of services we ask bridge training program providers to offer, depending on the category of program they are targeting.

What I want to focus on are some of the key findings we have learned about what makes for a successful program. I've offered more of those key findings in a binder that is available and will be distributed to the committee, either electronically or in hard copy if you'd like.

Successful programs target one specific occupation. They offer technical language training and communication training, as well as workplace culture orientation. They consult with employers as well as educators and regulators on the technical curriculum and specialized services in employment. They offer participants direct contact with employers, which is key. The stronger that contact is, the better the employment outcomes are likely to be. From a networking event, to a mentorship, to a paid internship, all these activities increase employment outcomes. Successful programs understand that employment services for highly skilled individuals need to be sector-specific. Results are best when service providers have industry-specific expertise. Finally, they engage a wide range of partners, including credential and language assessors, academic institutions, regulators, and employer champions.

Before I move on to my concluding remarks and recommendations, I want to take a brief moment to talk about financial access to these programs. In cases where a bridging program charges a fee or tuition, we are working closely with our service providers and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to ensure that participants in bridge training programs offered at post-

secondary institutions are eligible for financial assistance, either through the Ontario student assistance program—that's the OSAP loan—or through a new initiative the province has started called the Ontario bridging participant assistance program. The acronym for that is OBPAP. It's a bursary that provides up to \$5,000 to cover the tuition, book, and equipment costs of participating in one of our bridge training programs.

Finally, I'd like to offer four key recommendations on how we can move forward together in this area.

We recommend, first, that a national strategy supports provinces, which have responsibility for post-secondary education and employment services such as these bridge training programs. Federal funding for provincial bridge training programs should be allocated on a three-year cycle to better reflect the multi-year structure of the programs that are being offered. I should note that both orders of government and internationally trained individuals already benefit from a contribution agreement negotiated successfully between the federal government and Ontario to support these programs. We look forward to renewing this agreement, this time on a three-year cycle.

Second, we welcome federal support for the national dissemination of strong bridge training programs and tools.

Third, we recommend federal-provincial collaboration on improving access to financial aid for bridge training program participants. The federal government might like to consider a federal bursary that would also cover child care and transportation and/or expand the federal part-time student loan criteria to cover bridging costs for participants in financial need.

Finally, we welcome an opportunity to work collaboratively with the federal government to augment pre-arrival information services and resources, so that our skilled newcomers can really understand how to get started when they arrive here and what resources are available to them to help re-establish their careers here in Canada.

Thank you.

● (1545)

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

Now, we'll move on to Ms. Giblin. Go ahead.

**Ms. Cathy Giblin (Registrar and Director, Registration Services, College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta):** Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, honourable members, it's a privilege to appear before you today.

I'm here on behalf of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, which is the regulatory body and professional organization for Alberta's 33,000 registered nurses, the largest health profession in our province. Since 1916 we've been established under legislation and responsible for setting requirements to enter the profession, as well as establishing monitoring and enforcement standards of nursing practice.

My comments are framed primarily within the context of the assessment and recognition of internationally educated nurses, or IENs, and are based on our cumulative experience and expertise gained from reviewing and processing more than 9,000 applications from IENs over the last six-plus years.

Between 2007 and early 2009, there was a very proactive recruitment of internationally educated nurses in Alberta. Our regulatory body went from receiving an average of 40 applications per month to receiving more than 450 per month during the peak period. Much of the expertise and experience we've gained, however, is common to other regulated professions and regulatory agencies in Canada.

I'd like to describe a little bit about the steps in the assessment and recognition of IENs, as well as mention a couple of current activities that my organization is involved with. I'll describe some lessons learned, and then offer some recommendations to the committee.

The intent of IEN assessment at our regulatory organization is primarily to determine if an applicant has a combination of education, experience, practice, or other qualifications that demonstrate the competence required for registration in Alberta. Application can and should start when the applicant is still offshore. A number of documents are collected. Probably the most important piece of information we look for very early in the application process is the demonstration of language proficiency, and in Alberta that's English.

Last week you heard from Dr. Pam Nordstrom from Mount Royal University about the substantially equivalent competency assessment process. If we are unable to determine on the basis of paper alone that an individual has the required qualifications and competencies for practice in Alberta, we require a SEC assessment. This uses a combination of written, oral, and clinical skills exam techniques to determine the extent to which a person has the required skills and knowledge. Very often, following an SEC assessment, we will make a determination on the need for additional bridging education. Mount Royal University has been a partner with us in this endeavour since 2005.

Following the successful completion of bridging education, a person becomes eligible for provisional registration and can write the national entry-to-practice exam toward finalization of registration. Work experience in Alberta, with the submission of a satisfactory employer reference, is also required at this point and can be completed as the person is finishing the entry-to-practice exam.

There are a number of activities currently under way in which CARNA is involved, as well as some across jurisdictions and nationally. However, I'd like to highlight two of these initiatives in a little more detail.

This year CARNA learned that we had been successful in obtaining a grant from the federal government through the internationally educated health professions initiative to make a retrospective study of the characteristics and profile of applicants to us over the past five years, and correlate this with their registration outcomes. We are just getting under way with this piece of research, and we hope to have some recommendations for policy change,

particularly with a view toward shortening the process that is experienced by our applicants.

The other initiative that I'd like to draw your attention to is the national nursing assessment service project. This was initiated following recommendations arising from the 2005 report called *Navigating To Become A Nurse In Canada*. The national nursing assessment service project is seeking to establish a single point of contact for internationally educated nurses seeking registration anywhere in Canada. At this point in time, the assessment service is incorporating itself as an entity in Canada and has selected a vendor to provide these assessment services. A funding proposal to support the development of the next phases and to get this assessment service up and running is now before the federal government. The project is a success story considering the level of consensus and support that has been built among 23 regulatory bodies from across Canada, which are involved in the regulation of not only of registered nurses but also registered psychiatric nurses and practical nurses, or auxiliary nurses as they're known in Quebec.

● (1550)

With regard to the lessons learned or experiences acquired in the assessment and recognition of internationally educated nurses, over the past four years we have tracked the numbers of people who have applied to us and the length of time it has taken them to go through the registration and application process. One of the first measures showed us that it takes between 77 and 252 days for an individual to assemble a complete portfolio of documentation from which we, as a regulatory organization, can make an assessment. Following that assessment, it may take between 540 and 768 days from the time someone applies to us until they achieve registration as an RN in Alberta. There are a lot of reasons it can take that much time, and not all of these are within the control of the regulator.

The challenges experienced by individuals very often have to do with obtaining an exit or entry visa to come to the country to undergo assessment or to sit the exam. Sometimes they must enter the country with a student visa to undertake studies but are then required to have a work visa to complete the work experience that's required at the end of the registration process. Very often an individual comes from a country where the system of professional regulation is very different from what they've experienced here in Canada, and gaining an understanding of the processes involved in that system is quite a challenge. In Alberta we also experience issues getting access to both the competency assessment and bridging education.

Regulators experience challenges in sharing information about individuals. Often such sharing is limited by legislation as well, because of differences in our regulations from province to province. Time and volume also impact on our ability to receive and assess applications from internationally trained nurses.

Finally, managing expectations and communications with the wide variety of stakeholders, such as you and other interested parties in this process, is oftentimes quite a challenge for us.

Before I tell you about our recommendations, I would like to say that another very important lesson that has been learned is that a nurse is not a nurse is not a nurse. The health care systems in countries around the world vary a great deal, a fact that is sometimes particularly difficult to overcome for an individual wishing to integrate themselves into our workplace.

I'd like to recommend that the government consider clarifying in policy the difference between newcomers who enter the country under a temporary foreign worker program and those who are seeking to come in with landed status or permanent residence. In Alberta, for instance, many nurses arrive under the TFW program and clearly intend to stay permanently. Doing so becomes a challenge once they've obtained their first visa, and oftentimes they have to change their status at some point along the way.

I think that coordinated and flexible support is needed to increase access to assessment services, language training, and bridging education. Programs are also needed to address the need for workplace integration. We haven't yet experienced anything coordinated going on in this particular area in Alberta.

• (1555)

Finally, I'd like to say that we should not lose sight of the need to ensure quality and safety in the regulation of professionals and to support our regulatory mandate to protect the interests and well-being of the Canadian public.

Thank you very much for your attention today.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that presentation.

The first round will be to Ms. Hughes. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** I took quite a few notes, and I have a few questions.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities introduced the Ontario bridging participant assistance program, which provides bursaries of up to \$5,000 to internationally trained individuals who participate in eligible Ontario bridge training programs offered by Ontario colleges and universities.

The program was a pilot project that was supposed to end in March 2011. I'm just wondering if you could tell me what the conclusions of the pilot project were. Was the project helpful?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Are you referring to the bursary pilot?

I believe that the ministry may continue that program beyond March 31, 2011. I also know that the uptake of that program was very good. According to the comments we've heard, the financial assistance made a difference to an individual's ability to access education. We have a number of stories we've collected from participants, and we've asked people to write in about them. I don't have them with me here today.

We know that it's important for the individuals to know about the bursary. Often the challenge with these programs and services is being able to get the word out there and market them so that people know that there is an option. We have worked with our program deliverers to make sure that potential participants know that there's either an OSAP loan or a bursary for programs at post-secondary institutions.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Do you know how many people actually participated in the program?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Do you mean how many received a bursary? I'd have to check, but I will send the information to the clerk.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** You said that they're looking at extending it.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Yes.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Perfect. Sometimes we have to read our notes.

Obviously, you've tapped into the foreign credential recognition program, as you've indicated.

• (1600)

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** We have contributed to it by offering what Ontario has done in terms of developing tools. We have participated in the process in a consultative way.

Ontario has, for a number of years, piloted and funded foreign credential recognition tools and processes. Through a competitive call-for-proposal process, we have allowed regulators to come to us and propose that they will develop a tool to assess either language or competence based on experience. We have been funding those tools and instruments for a while.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** In your recommendations you mentioned the national strategy.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I mentioned that it would helpful to be able to better share across Canada the work that is effective. I think we have much to learn from all provinces, but we need a way of disseminating those results. Let me give you an example. Our pharmacy program has already been working with British Columbia to offer the Ontario program that's been piloted here and in operation here for a while. Now it's being offered by a university in British Columbia. The curriculum is there. The work has been done. The tools have been created, and now there's another university able to offer that.

In some of the regulated professions, there are only one or two institutions in Canada that are able to offer that kind of training. Veterinary science is very specialized. Optometry is very specialized. Pharmacy is very specialized. Not every university has a pharmacy program. A lot of work is being done across Canada in the nursing area, and I think the nursing regulators have done well to come together and share. There's a variety of different types of curricula that exist that would be useful to share across the country.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Could you elaborate, because you also mentioned in your recommendations the three-year training cycle? I'm just trying to get some sense of the funding. Does the funding need to be for at least three years?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I'm glad you asked that question. I was hoping you might.

The training cycle for an individual is not three years, but it does take three years to develop curriculum, to pilot test it, and then to get the results and analyze them. We have seen that this is typically a three-year cycle of development.

On the programs themselves, some of the interventions we fund are for 6 weeks and others are for 18 months. When it gets to a program that's beyond 24 months, that's no longer bridging education but retraining and re-education. That's for advance standing in a university program or for going to college for a diploma-level certificate.

But the funding required to pilot test, research, and develop the tools and the programs typically takes about three years. We've tried to do it in two years, but usually the organizations come back, as they need a bit more time, from six months to eight months. So three years is the right cycle for funding developmental pilot initiatives.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Hughes. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. Butt.

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Gordon, and Ms. Giblin, for being here. I'm particularly happy that we finally got to the stage where we have some of our friends in the provinces come to see us today.

I have some concerns about what roles the federal government's two ministries, Human Resources and Skills Development and Citizenship and Immigration—and of course the Foreign Credentials Referral Office—and the provinces should be playing in this.

I represent a riding in Mississauga and have tens of thousands of new Canadians living there. All they want to be able to do is to work in whatever profession they know from their country of origin. They don't really want a bureaucratic shuffle regarding who is responsible, where they should go, and why they can't practise being a doctor here but they can somewhere else.

You've given some helpful recommendations today. I wonder if you could expand on where you see our role as the federal government in this, where you see the role of the provinces, and where you see the role of the regulatory bodies. We know that half the challenge is getting the regulatory bodies to recognize a lot of the foreign credentials. You talked about it, Ms. Giblin, from a nurse's perspective and I appreciate that. We want highly trained people practising in Canada and want to know that their standards are appropriate to practise the profession of nursing and many other professions.

Does either one of you want to take a bit more time on how you see the role of those three organizations, so that we're not duplicating what each of us is doing but making the best use of taxpayers' money to help integrate these new Canadians as workers in their professional expertise?

Do you want to start, Ms. Giblin?

• (1605)

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** I think I can probably answer the question best by giving you an example, and that would be the national nursing assessment service that I referred to earlier. It is a project that has been under way for the last four years with the support of funding from the federal government. It has brought 23 regulators together.

When the project first started, I was extremely skeptical that we would come to consensus on anything. However, by getting people

together in a room for a common purpose over time, we've seen that we have all agreed on what sort of portfolio information should be presented to any regulator for consideration of eligibility for registration. That sounds like a small thing, but it was a tremendous hurdle for all of us to overcome.

I think the other benefit of working in a collaborative fashion like that with the support of our government is that it offers the opportunity for us to have face-to-face dialogue and explore other areas where we can achieve a level of consensus and agree that our standards don't necessarily have to be different from the others.

I think the national nursing assessment service project is one example. It offers a lot of potential to address some of the problems you identified—duplication of services and discoordination of information between the different entities—and put the best use of available resources at the forefront.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Did you want to respond as well, Ms. Gordon?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Sure.

Thank you for your question.

In terms of the federal and the provincial roles, I mentioned that Ontario has negotiated successfully a contribution agreement with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to meet the funding needs of bridge training programs in Ontario. That agreement built on a very successful, although somewhat unique, arrangement that we had with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to take advantage of the terms under the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and co-fund bridge training programs. It was a rather cumbersome process. Ontario identified the projects and then, in consultation with the federal government, we actually shared the contracts. In that way we were able not to duplicate funding—because the federal government could have received those proposals as well. We could contract them and each contribute financially to the cost of the programs, and benefit the skilled professionals overall.

With the contribution agreement we've achieved tremendous administrative ease for our stakeholders. The federal government works alongside us and is part of the selection process, in that they see what projects we're recommending. We work side by side as officials to make sure that we're not duplicating funding when submissions come in. That's a very concrete and productive way to make sure we're spending the money where it's going to be of benefit. The contribution agreement is extremely helpful to Ontario; it's a strong model that allows us to integrate the services into our other employment services and post-secondary education services without a lot of jurisdictional duplication.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that, Ms. Gordon.

We'll now move to Ms. Day.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP):** It is a pleasure for me to be here today. I will address you in French. I have a number of questions to ask.

First, what is the average age of participants in this program? What age groups do they belong to?

[English]

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** We collect that information. I have to say that it's not always submitted in the most rigorous manner, but I can answer your question.

The ages range enormously, but most of the individuals are in their thirties to early forties. That fits with the profile of immigrants at the time they come to Canada. Our experience is that they tend to be individuals who've been in Canada very early on in their career. They are people who've been here less than three years. The bulk of the people are split between the very new arrivals who've been in Canada less than three years, and another one-quarter of a per cent of people who participate in our programs and who have been in Canada for longer than five years. They are perhaps a little bit older; they're not in their fifties, but in their thirties and early forties.

You have to understand that we're dealing both with regulated professions and non-regulated professions. I know that the bridge training program providers have said that in a regulated profession, it's not always possible to go back to your profession when you haven't been practising it for a certain period of time. Some of the programs have criteria like that, saying that you must have worked in your profession—even in your home country—but that you cannot have been away from it for more than a period of three or four years.

• (1610)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** Thank you.

First, which occupations will be affected? Is there any correlation between the occupations which will have shortages in Ontario and the affected occupations of the immigrants who will come to Canada?

I also understand that each occupation will be scrutinized, task by task. Who will decide which task is eligible and which is not? Is it the educational institution, the unions or the professional associations? Who will determine the description of an occupation that will be acceptable once an immigrant is in training?

[English]

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I just want to make sure that I understood your question.

You wanted to know what professions we're serving with the bridging programs and how we know if there's a shortage of skills, but I didn't understand or hear properly the last part of your question. I'm sorry.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** I will try to explain the last part of my question. Take for example the profession mentioned by Ms. Giblin. She talked about nursing. In order to put an immigrant in touch with the profession, in internship or in workplace training, I guess the immigrant must carry out a lot of tasks before receiving a degree or being registered because you have to check if that person has the required skills to handle these tasks.

Who identifies these tasks? Is it the professional association, the union, the government? Who makes the decision?

[English]

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Thank you.

In terms of professions, Ontario has funded bridge programs for training in more than 100 professions. We have a program in every regulated profession that has major immigrant landings, and by that, I mean immigrant landings of more 10.

We have nursing, medical lab technologists, pharmacists, agrologists—I never knew what agrologists were before I started this job—veterinarians, and optometrists. There's a big range of programs, and I'd be happy to share a list with this committee. Equally we have programs in the high-skilled, non-regulated occupations: human resources, IT, financial services, supply chain management, and those kinds of things. We have a very wide range of programs and professions that we've served.

How do we determine what professions we're going to serve, and is that decision linked to shortages in the labour market? In our applications process we're looking at employment outcomes but also at increased access to regulated professions.

In the regulated professions, one of our concerns is whether there is any program available to someone in that occupation that would help them prepare their dossier, which for the nurses, for example, takes 200-plus days to prepare. If the answer is no, even if the labour market demand is weak, we will fund or consider funding an initiative that at least increases someone's access to that regulatory process and his or her opportunity to compete.

When it comes to funding professions where there are no regulations—so it's a high-skilled occupation—the key criteria is evidence of employer demand. That's how we get strong employment outcomes. We insist that there be labour market research given to us.

I will say, though, that at the end of the day, we can all quote government studies and C.D. Howe Institute reports, but the best indication of employer demand is a strong set of letters from employers who say they will mentor five people, or they have six internships, or they need to hire this many people and they will agree to meet them for coffee to network and to shake their hands. That is the best indication of employer need and hunger for these programs.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gordon. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. McColeman.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

And thank you for being here today.

I want to get your thoughts and comments on a remark that you just made in terms of looking at the specific needs of the types of employers who are there, and then gearing programs to the areas that have a need. For example, it's my impression that we do not need more teachers applying for jobs, because many of the kids who are graduating in my community—and others may be similar—will not be close to being able to get a job as a teacher for probably 10 years in Ontario.

I liked what you said about the employers driving the bridging programs, but with these programs there are certain relevant categories—and here I would point out that I've come from a trades and construction background—such as electricians, plumbers, bricklayers, and the like, where there's a huge need right across the country. I'm sure that this applies in certain medical professions as well. So when you're focusing resources on programs, do you do market analysis to say this is where we should be funnelling them because this is what's needed in the Greater Toronto Area right now?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Yes, we do that as best we can. You mentioned teachers. If you go to the Ontario College of Teachers' website, you'll see a page specially developed for internationally trained teachers, explaining to them in plain language how they can become licensed. That page exists because many years ago we did have a teacher bridging program. We don't have one now, but the access route is there. The imprint has been left, so someone can understand what they have to do if they wish to pursue that route.

You mentioned trades. I think it's fair to tell this committee that I focused on all of our successes because I'm from Ontario, and we're very pleased to be here. But we've had some failures too. You can't have funded 240 projects without some strange results. One of them is in the trades.

We have funded projects in the trades. We are trying to do that and have focused on that. We have come across a number of challenges, some of them systemic. One of the problems in the past has been that the labour market was so strong in that area that someone could get a job in the construction industry and not have to take the time to go through the certification process. You probably know of some recent changes that might affect that dynamic, so interest in participating in those programs would resurface.

You asked whether we look at labour market studies. We do our very best to do that. One of the reasons we have many nursing programs is that a while ago, Ontario said that we needed a certain number of nurses. We said we'd put special consideration on programs in nursing.

All that is to say that these programs have to be of a high quality and able to deliver good outcomes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Do you have the capacity in your services to counsel people that there may not be a job as a teacher, but there is a job as an electrician? Perhaps retraining would go on. Do you do that type of bridging for individuals?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I will be as short as I can be here. It's a subject of debate. We have limited resources, so how do spend them when they are supposed to be bridging like to like?

We recognize that this is the issue in some professions, so we have piloted some initiatives in certain professions. We have an alternative careers program for lawyers, for example, and one that we're piloting for doctors. The idea is to take their skills and knowledge and help them move into the broader field, but not retrain them. There's a retraining program so a teacher can become an electrician, but it involves starting all over again. There are initiatives for a second career, or just going back to school and reinventing yourself.

There's an organization called Global Experience Ontario, which is an access centre for internationally trained individuals. We hope

that our employment services can provide that kind of information and resource for people who have to make that very difficult decision.

• (1620)

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** From a lot of the testimony we've heard from witnesses, there seems to be agreement that it is essential to do much of the pre-screening and pre-qualifying before someone immigrates. We need to move toward that in terms of our immigration policies, for example. Do you agree with that?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I do. There is a program now overseas that I'm sure you've heard of called CIIP, which Citizenship and Immigration Canada has funded. We're just starting to see the results. Success in that program would be seeing an individual who's a nurse arrive here and enter a bridging program within three months. That's the kind of service continuum that would be wonderful to see—and there's really a strong role for the federal government there.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gordon.

We'll move to Mr. Cuzner now.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thanks very much.

Thanks to both of you for your testimony.

On Phil's last question, Ms. Giblin, you indicated that you encourage nurses to start the application process before they come to Canada. In most instances do they begin that before coming to Canada?

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** Yes, although over the last year we've experienced an increasing number of applicants who are making applications with Canadian addresses, and particularly Alberta addresses. We're tracking those individuals to identify what the differences are. I suspect that most of them are already landed, as opposed to seeking to apply for registration with the intent of obtaining a work visa or other entry to the country following that.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** So you're seeing an increase in that domestic base.

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** Yes.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** I want to get into the bridging issue. You had indicated there were barriers to getting access to bridging in Alberta. Does the Province of Alberta have a similar branch of its citizenship portfolio within that department? Does it have something specifically in regard to bridging to help you find bridging opportunities?

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** Not in the coordinated fashion that Ms. Gordon has been describing in Ontario, no.

I'm sorry that I'm not familiar with what happens with other professions within Alberta, in terms of the kind of support the government offers for bridging education programs.

The bridging education that's available for nurses in Alberta is supported by the Alberta government through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Now in Ontario, obviously, the unit is the bridging one. Is it a fairly new unit? Have you guys been up and at it for quite a while?

Are there similar units in other provinces?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Our unit has been in existence since the 1990s. It's had a different name, previously being called Access to Professions and Trades. It's moved from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration at least twice.

Are there other units in other provinces? There are not any specifically like ours, but the role or the inquiry into the issue would come under either their human resources or employment services, or the post-secondary education arm, of a ministry.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Does that go back to your second recommendation, where you were saying that there should be a national disseminator of bridging opportunities? Could you maybe expand a little bit on your second recommendation?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Especially with the agreement on internal trade coming, there is an awful lot of interest in doing this kind of work, and regulatory bodies across the country are engaged in it and interested in it. We do need to coordinate the best of what is available and to start to share and use it. The federal government certainly could have a role in facilitating that, but also in helping to fund the service.

You don't start in an engineering or a nurse bridge training program without a significant investment.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** In Alberta as well, Ms. Giblin, you indicated that it's a challenge to get access to bridging programs. But the competency assessments are difficult to come by as well. Who is doing that now? Is it Mount Royal College that does the bulk of that for you?

• (1625)

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** Yes, currently Mount Royal does the competency assessment.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Are the fees charged assumed by the applicant?

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** No, there is no fee for the assessment. If individuals are required to go on and complete additional education following the assessment, then yes, they would be charged for tuition fees, books, etc.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move to Mr. Daniel for the final five minutes.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you very much.

I'm just going to take you on a slightly different tack, just to assess how much this process and system is bleeding.

What I mean by that is that I have people coming to my office and talking to me about recruiting Canadians to go to China and other places, because of their language skills, etc., and I'm wondering whether you track that or whether you actually look at that in any way—for example, the nurses coming in, going through this bridging process, and then going and working in the U.S. instead of working here, since they pay a lot more for nursing.

That's for either or both of you.

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** I can speak to that a little bit.

In short, no, we're not tracking that sort of thing. We know anecdotally about situations like the ones you described, but we've not had the need, the time, or the resources required to track individuals for the long term as they enter our systems and then move within them.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** We do track employment outcomes for up to a year after a participant has graduated from a bridging program. From the outcomes I have seen, I have not seen any U.S. employers on the lists. I haven't seen all of the outcomes and all of the employers, but it hasn't been brought to my attention.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Okay.

Could you talk a little bit more about your mentoring program? Again, from experience, I think mentoring seems to have a huge payout in getting people into work situations. I'm a first-generation Canadian, and the climate is such that the question is always asked, "Where's your Canadian experience?" Of course, you can't get experience without getting a job, and you can't get a job without experience, so you're locked in that kind of loop. I've heard that some of these mentoring programs actually are good at getting people into the workforce and getting them engaged.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Yes, they are. In the continuum that I handed out, one of the things we ask all of our bridging program service providers to do is to bring people directly into contact with employers. They might choose to do that through mentoring.

One initiative whose start-up we have funded and continue to fund is the mentoring partnership with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which is what you're probably thinking about. We also have one in London, Ontario, and we have other programs that are for mentorship in regulated occupations. In nursing, for example, it takes the form of a preceptorship. These programs do have a strong impact.

Right here in Ottawa, there's a very strong organization, Hire Immigrants Ottawa. They do a networking type of mentorship. Honestly, I wouldn't have believed that this works: You go and have coffee and stand in a corner. If you're IT, you go over to that corner. If I'm government, I stand in this corner. People are trained in how to interact. Jobs and matches are made. They've managed to place over 1,000 immigrant professionals using that type of system in the past four or five years. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen the results and been to an event myself.

It's that coming into contact and getting people to share that counts—"Maybe you should go talk to my friend so-and-so". Building that network of people and support is very important. Mentorship programs do it in a very structured, organized way.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Ms. Giblin, do you have any comments?

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** I have nothing comparable to offer that's happening in Alberta, although I would have to say that the kind of structure Ms. Gordon is describing is absolutely essential.

I think there's a lot of willingness to offer those sorts of services and to be involved. People ask, "Where do I go? How do I get started? I'm one employer. I'm one immigrant-serving agency. How do we participate?" It's bringing all of those willing participants together under that kind of structure that I think is absolutely essential.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** On another question, a number of the other associations have a pan-Canadian ability. In other words, they've actually worked with the associations in each of the provinces so that if you are qualified or have reached a particular standard in Ontario and then move to Alberta, where there are tons of jobs, it's a straightforward transfer. There are no barriers to your performing in your profession.

We've also heard that from a nursing point of view and from service people. Their wives transfer with them, from Nova Scotia to Ontario, and the wives can't work in nursing, because it's not connected in any way.

Are there any comments on what could be done to accelerate that sort of pan-Canadian situation?

• (1630)

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I think the agreement on internal trade will certainly accelerate that pretty quickly. That's one aspect of it, clearly.

I think encouraging the regulatory bodies and giving them an opportunity to come together, discuss, share, and identify the tools and processes they would agree to use would be helpful.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up. Your testimony has been quite interesting.

I have something to put before the committee. We're going to suspend for about five to eight minutes for the next witness.

We have one witness from the Government of Manitoba. The suggestion is that the witness from Manitoba could present, and if there is consent from the committee, we could have the two of you remain at the table. Then the questions could be posed to any of the three of you, depending on your time constraints.

First, do you have any difficulty remaining for a further period of one hour?

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I'm fine with that.

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** You're keeping me out of the mall, but I'm fine with that.

**The Chair:** That might be advantageous to some extent.

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** It's probably advisable if I stay with you, actually.

**The Chair:** I'll just ask the members of the committee if they have any objection to proceeding in that way.

If that is agreeable, we will suspend for about five to eight minutes and then we'll recommence.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

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• (1635)

**The Chair:** I will call the meeting to order.

I know the committee has been doing very well so far in terms of cooperation. I wonder if I can ask the committee's indulgence for one further point. If we change from our regular rounds of five minutes to rounds of seven minutes each, and we went one complete round, we would be finishing here near 5:30 and, of course, many have to leave at 5:30.

So would the committee be agreeable to deviating from our regular practice to seven-minute rounds? Everybody would get one round and then we'd be done.

I see agreement. We won't hesitate too much longer.

I might mention that you will have five to seven minutes to present. If you go a little longer, we'll be okay with that and then there will be rounds of seven minutes of questioning from each of the parties.

We'll start with you, Ms. Munoz. Go ahead, please.

• (1640)

**Ms. Ximena Munoz (Commissioner, Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner, Department of Labour and Immigration, Government of Manitoba):** Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity.

Practical recommendations to further shorten FQR processes are really important to me. A shortened process certainly is important.

I am Ximena Munoz, and I am the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner. That's a very new position. I've been in that job for only two years. There are only three commissioners in the country—one in Ontario, one in Quebec, and one in Manitoba. My job is to implement the new act, which came into effect in 2009.

Today, I would like to talk to you about the work of the self-regulated bodies.

Immigration is key for Manitoba. We need the people. We are working very hard to attract people. We need them to come in and be able to integrate into the labour market in their professions, and it's taking too long. I was at a focus group the other day where immigrants were congratulating each other because for somebody it had taken only four years to get recognized as accountant. Four years is a long time.

Manitoba has been very committed to this issue since 2003. The approach we took in Manitoba was to look at the need for systemic change. So it wasn't just preparing immigrants; it was looking at what we're doing and how we're doing it and asking ourselves if that was the right way and the best way to do it. The process was led by the provincial government, and one of the main things that came out of it was the recognition and acceptance that this issue was not any one body's responsibility. Really, there are many stakeholders involved in this, and it really will take all of us to find a solution.

In 2009 the Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act was proclaimed. The act requires that regulatory bodies—and Manitoba has 31 of them—have assessment and registration processes that are fair, transparent, objective, and impartial, and that they appoint a commissioner—and that's me—and also commit to supporting immigrants and to supporting regulators to come up with better practices.

It also requires that the regulators report to me on applicants and their numbers, which is something they haven't had to do to date. So I get to review the assessment processes. I get to sit down with them and go over what they do, what they ask people to have, how they assess them, and what exam or practicum and so on is used. We start in many cases from what the regulator is doing, even pre-migration, in terms of giving people information. We see our process ending when people get to work in their profession. So it isn't just about getting the recognition but actually getting a recognized licence and practising in their profession.

The focus of our work is not the professional standards of each profession but rather how regulators assess people against those standards. That's where we think a lot of the issues are, and I think we've been proven pretty right. They're not being asked to lower their standards and let immigrants in through the back door. They're being asked to make sure that the way in which they assess them is fair.

We take a very collaborative approach to that work. We were second in the country; Ontario was ahead of us, and is always a year or so ahead of us. Actually, the woman sitting next to me was the key drafter of that initial law in Ontario, and we benefited a lot from that, so she deserves a lot of credit.

● (1645)

The bridge that we decided to use in Manitoba was collaborative, collegial, and supportive. I started from the premise that there are no bad guys, there are just people trying to do a job and there may be things they don't know how to do very well. You may be a very good architect, but that doesn't mean you're a good assessor or a good evaluator. So we started from that perspective.

We've also been able to provide some financial support. It isn't only about looking at what they're doing, how they're doing it, and how they could do it better, but what is it they have to do, how do they are going about doing it, and who is helping them with the funding.

My office has taken that on, and as a result I think we have some really good things. We have much better information for immigrants, so people can access information even before they come here. There are better websites. We've done a lot of work in terms of plain language and things like that. We've done a lot of capacity development activities. We've done training on appeals, which is required by the law. They must have appeal processes and, believe me, many of them don't. We've done managing cultural diversity, and we've done written reasons.

We've also engaged regulators from outside of Manitoba to share what they do. We just had a fantastic presentation by the med labs, the medical laboratory society nationally. Different bodies have come in to share with us. The lawyers did a session on written

reasons, and the engineers did a session on reconsideration of decisions, etc.

They are required, for the first time, to provide us with information on how many people are applying, and how many are successful and how many are not. We are also tracking all the steps in the process, for each of them. We don't just want to find out that ten applied and only one got recognized, but where the nine who didn't get recognized failed and where the problems are.

We think that is really going to help us—

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Munoz, but could you put your microphone down a little bit? It's causing a bit of a squeal.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Okay, thank you.

So we are very happy about that. Regulators started collecting the data in January of 2011, and they're going to provide us with the first set of data in March 2012.

In order for them to do that, we did a lot of work with them. We also provided financial support to make sure they had the databases and systems that allow them to actually gather this information. In Manitoba, by the way, over 60% of the regulatory bodies have a staff of three people or fewer, so they are small.

The other thing we have done with them is something that we're calling professional practice seminars. One of the challenges that immigrants are facing—and I'm sure you've heard a lot about that by now—is knowing and understanding the culture of the profession in Canada and finding places where they can go to find that out, particularly in the health professions where you cannot set foot in a practice until you are recognized.

Where do people learn that? They are assessed on that, so my call was why don't we teach people this? When you're teaching them, they'll know it, rather than just testing them.

Professional practice seminars are something we have worked on with them. Immigrants will have access to them. There are seven workshops dealing with the culture in the workplace where you work, how much you get paid, management styles, co-workers, jurisprudence, safety, etc.

● (1650)

**The Chair:** We need you to wrap up, if you could.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I will, but I have to get to my point.

This has been challenging for regulators. Right now they are subject to a lot of demands from various parts. Labour mobility is a big issue for them. The pan-Canadian framework is something else in their field.

At least the Manitoba numbers are increasing; they're seeing more people applying. Many feel they just don't have the expertise to really deal with this effectively. They really have limited resources and structures.

I think there are some other issues as well. I'll be very gentle, but I think we still have an ethnocentric view that if it's Canadian, it's much better. Nobody can come close to what we have in Canada. I think that's true in many instances, but it's not true in everything, and it's not allowing us to see the other—

**The Chair:** I have to interrupt you there. You might be able to complete this in your answers. There will be seven-minute rounds.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Can I just take two more minutes?

**The Chair:** No.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I didn't get to my recommendations, sir.

**The Chair:** Your recommendations are important, so if you don't get to them through the questioning, we'll probably give you an opportunity at the end, or you can submit them to the committee. But we have to respect the time. I've given you well over the time we normally allow.

We'll go first to Mr. Choquette. You have seven minutes, but you can share your time with others.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP):** I will split my time with my colleague, Mr. Patry.

First, I want to thank you for coming here today to testify. This is interesting, particularly since in my area of Drummondville, we have many immigrants with degrees. All the people I meet as well as all organizations tell me about this integration problem and how it is difficult to get a job quickly. Recognition of credentials is also a major problem.

My first question is to Mrs. Munoz and Ms. Gordon.

What fields of study or what professions are the most difficult for immigrants who want to get their skills and credentials recognized?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Ximena Munoz:** I think those in the health professions have a very difficult time, because they cannot observe or volunteer until they have some recognition. I think that's very difficult. Dentists and doctors have difficulty, because there are very few spots for them and the process takes a long time. In health, the longer you're out of practice, every day and minute counts against you. After five years out of practice that's it; they won't look at you. So I think the health professions have the most difficult time.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I agree and would add that another challenge is the legal profession, because the law is substantively different from one jurisdiction to another. It presents a significant training challenge. We are working on that in Ontario. We have a very good law program, but there isn't automatic recognition in law. It's even more different than in other regulated professions.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you.

My question is to Ms. Giblin first. My riding is mainly rural, and I am wondering about what is to be done in order to better integrate immigrants with degrees in the labour market. Are there programs or incentives to help them integrate in rural areas?

Ms. Giblin, you can answer my question. After that, I will ask the other witnesses if they have any further comments.

[*English*]

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** I had a conversation about this issue during our break. For nursing in Alberta there are no formal programs that support people to go into rural or remote settings. However, in Alberta we have the rural physician action plan. It is a program that supports internationally trained physicians to enter practice in rural and remote settings. We don't have a similar kind of program for the nursing profession in Alberta.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I can tell you that in Manitoba it is a real issue. In the rural areas, the locations are small and far away. The situation we're facing in Manitoba is around the fact that doctors, the international medical graduates who are getting assessed, can get a provisional licence to practise, but the provisional licence is only to practise outside of Winnipeg.

So the situation we're dealing with in Manitoba is that IMGs with a provisional licence working up north, or in very small locations, have no support. They have nobody else there, no other colleagues. And they're saying that this doesn't make any sense: You're giving me a provisional licence and I'm the only one here, when the other ones have full licences and there are three or four in a practice.

So getting people to the rural areas is a problem, but supporting them while they're there is also a real issue.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** I'll be very brief and say that in Ontario we have similar initiatives for doctors in rural areas.

With particular regard to the bridging programs, our program actually doesn't have responsibility for the doctors. That's the Ministry of Health. For all other professions, we are trying to work with municipalities through immigration portals, and also through bridging programs that, in the northern areas of Ontario, for example, are really providing a base for recruitment. It isn't exactly our model, but they need immigrants, they have the training institutions, they have the expertise, and they have the employers. They need the people.

So we are working in a more creative way with them to offer bridge training programs in areas where there is a labour market demand and to help them build the tools and supports so that people will feel welcome when they come and integrate successfully into the workforce once they're there.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Choquette:** Thank you.

I will leave the rest of my time to Claude Patry.

**Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies.

Mrs. Munoz, you said that three provinces have an agreement, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. Is this an agreement between provincial representatives? You said that Ontario is ahead of Manitoba. Where does Quebec fit in there?

[English]

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Quebec was the third. Actually, no, it was the last, the fourth.

Nova Scotia has an act but they don't have a commissioner. Quebec is slightly different in that they have a commissioner of complaints. He has to set up a system to address the complaints that immigrants have with the process of the regulatory bodies.

That's not part of the Ontario or Manitoba law. In fact, the law says I cannot get involved in registration decisions, but I do get involved in processes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. Mayes, for seven minutes....

Actually, it's Ms. Leitch; you can share your time with your colleagues, if you need to.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** No problem. Thank you very much.

Thank you for presenting today.

To begin, Ms. Munoz, could I ask you to take two minutes to tell concisely what your recommendations are?

• (1700)

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Well, my perspective is this: why is it that we haven't solved this? People have been working at this for years and years. We're not stupid people. Why is it that we still have a problem?

I think initially it had a lot to do with pointing fingers, i.e., whose responsibility was this? Some people said it was the federal government; they bring the people in. Some people said it was the provinces; they were responsible for the education. Other people, that is, the provinces, said no, no, it was really the regulators who determined that. But the regulators said they worked with the post-secondary institutions. It was nobody's problem.

I think we've solved that now. I think generally in Canada people are working together to try to solve this. I think we've tried to fix the immigrant part and we're now trying to fix the regulators.

In a way, I think we're just tinkering around the edges. I'm not sure we're really dealing with what is at the bottom of the issue. I want to put forward the notion that perhaps it's time to look at the regulatory model we have in Canada. My experience with regulators is that many of them are caught in this dual role that many of them play. One is responsible for regulating and deciding the standards for entry and the standards for conduct. On the other side is the profession, promoting the profession, advocating for the profession, etc.

Those two roles are not compatible. I think we have wanted people to really be able to work like that, and I think many of them try very hard, but because of the need for more work, need for more resources, etc., that's becoming more and more of an issue.

I have executive directors and registrars saying to me, you know, my board is really unhappy that I'm doing all of this work for international professionals; they want me to do work for the existing members.

My position is that I think the oversight of regulatory activity is not a bad thing. Fairness acts I think can be very helpful, but I don't think they are the solution, either. I can see how far we can go with that and I can see that we're not going to solve the problem.

I want to tell you that I think this may be a time that warrants looking at a model that was set up in the late 1800s and early 1900s. I think it's old for the times. We're in a different world; things are different right now. I think we need a better system.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Maybe I can ask you a specific question with regard to that. This is along the lines of what the federal government's role can be in that.

I'd like to ask each of you what you see as the specific role of the federal government with respect to that and the approach to credential recognition. We've had obviously some varied comments. Just very concisely, if there were one specific thing we could do, just one, what would it be?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I'm not sure there is one thing.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** I just want the number one thing. What is your number one priority?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Money: financial support for regulators and financial support for the gap training and bridging programs.

We have some very good programs in Manitoba. Everything is pilot. There's no money. They're not sustainable. There's no money for ongoing programming.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Maybe I can ask Ms. Gordon and Ms. Giblin the same question.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** Well, Ontario really would say money as well, but I think we need to be more creative, and I think you want to hear what particular role the federal government could play.

I think that our information overseas has to be really, really clear. You heard today about plain language information. In Ontario, and I think the other provinces too, we have career maps, or fact sheets really, that tell you how to get started.

When we have the agreement on internal trade in place and regulators are moving to a more common approach, having plain language information overseas, marketing that, and getting people to read it and understand it overseas would really do a tremendous service to our labour market, and also to them.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Can I follow up on that?

•(1705)

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** I have a question for her.

Ms. Giblin, can I ask for your comments here?

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** I would have to agree with Ms. Gordon's comments about information overseas. It's a tremendous leap to imagine somebody coming from Manila and successfully integrating into the workplace in Fort McMurray, Alberta. That's what's happening. That's what people are encountering. Getting information in plain language that realistically presents our Canadian context to people before they leave their countries is something that would be tremendously beneficial.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Just to go back, I know that the other two of you, Ms. Gordon and Ms. Giblin, were asked whether it was valuable that it be a single-sourced shop. We have several programs overseas, as well as here in Canada. We heard your answer to that question, Ms. Munoz.

Do you think it would be more valuable to have single-source, single-area, one-stop shopping for dealing with the foreign credentialing file from a federal government perspective?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Right now the federal government offers several programs between several different departments. Would a single source be helpful, or is it better to deal with the multiple departments?

**The Chair:** Make it a short answer, Ms. Munoz.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I think, for sure, multiple departments to get.... No, sorry, single-source, I guess—

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Working together?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Yes, working together for sure.

I think the information is very good. The issue with information is that it has to be the right information. That's where we're failing right now. Regulators are not involved in what information is being put out there. Much of the information out there is just not specific enough to be helpful to people.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We'll move now to Ms. Day.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** I will address you in French, so I will speak slowly. I have a lot of questions to ask. I am particularly interested in workplace training.

People from other countries who get on-the-job training receive allowances for transportation and childcare, but do they get paid while on training? This is a very short question that Ms. Gordon can answer at this time.

[*English*]

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** In our bridge training programs, the issue of design is left to each service provider. The answer is that in some of the programs they are paid work placements; in others, they may not be. Some programs offer work placements; some only offer a mentorship or a networking event with an employer. What we try to

do in all instances is to push the service provider to get that employer interaction.

In the regulated professions where a clinical component is required before one can sit the exam, those are paid. We would prefer that all of the work placements be paid. Again, the issue is to get the individuals to meet the employer. When we talked about mentorship earlier, mentorship is a wonderful program. But I can tell you that when somebody is in a job for three to six months, the retention rate is usually 80%. It's about having the job. It's about being in the workplace with the right kind of supports—and that doesn't take very much often. That is really the key factor. So it's a bit of both, to answer your question.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** My next question is about ethics. I understand three provinces are presently involved, Nova Scotia where this is being done, as well as Ontario and Manitoba.

Do ethics commissioners meet for discussions? What are the main constraints you are facing?

[*English*]

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** We've started to. I think they've been helpful initially in just looking at our approach. When I first came on, I went to Ontario and spent some time with the office in Ontario. Nova Scotia is now doing the same thing.

We are looking for a venue to actually get together. We get together at conferences or things like that. But we haven't really had a more structured way of connecting, and we would like to have that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** I do not know if it is the fairness commissioner or Ms. Giblin who will answer my next question.

For example, when an immigrant who is a nursing graduate is involved in a bridge training program, she gets a degree when she completes her training.

Is this degree recognized as being equivalent to that of Canadian-trained nurses? When she completes the bridge training program, can she apply for a job and get the same salary as a Canadian-trained nurse? If not, what is the difference between immigrants and those who are Canadian-trained?

•(1710)

[*English*]

**Ms. Cathy Giblin:** Would you like me to start?

At the very least, in Alberta there is no difference. The pay rates are set through collective agreements established between the health service providers and the labour unions. I believe that's the case in each of the provinces across the country.

Therefore, no, the agreements don't consider where the person was educated. They all come with the same credential and they're paid accordingly.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** Is it difficult to find jobs for trainees?

I am really sorry. I do not know how to pronounce your name. Is it Mrs. Munoz?

[English]

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** You can call me Ximena; it's easier.

Well, Ontario's situation is very different from the rest of the country's. As Suzanne was saying, they're all really important and interesting, but it's not the reality across the country. In Manitoba there are very few programs where people can actually get work experience and get paid; those are almost non-existent.

I'm sorry, I forgot the last question you had. Is it difficult to set up programs? Was that the question?

It is difficult because you need a group of stakeholders together, and you need the employers at the table. That's been a big challenge—to get the employers to the table. What employers keep saying to me is that they want one source, a trusted source, who can tell them, “Yes, take this person because, although they haven't been recognized yet, I know they have this and this and that, and it's going to be helpful for you.” That doesn't really exist.

So it is difficult. If the programs are just being run by immigrant agencies, they have very little credibility when it comes to the regulated professions. Those employers want to talk to somebody who knows about the profession, who can tell them about an immigrant in that profession.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:** In my own province of Quebec, there is a shortage of labour in many areas. I guess it is the same in Central Canada. You probably have the same shortages.

Are some trades and professions specifically targeted when programs are set up to attract more people? Yes?

[English]

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** Yes, we do. We have a very successful provincial nominee program that does that.

We have no control over are the spouses of people who come selected for a particular profession. So we have more doctors or dentists coming in who have not been selected, but they are the spouses of someone who has been selected. They are in the province and they're going to make their life there, and they're looking for recognition to be able to work in their profession.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is up.

We'll move to Mr. Mayes. Go ahead.

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

One of the interesting things that I want to follow up on is what Mr. McColeman said about the trades. I think, Madam Gordon, you said that in some instances they were sort of bypassing the process of getting credentials and just going to work.

All of you are from or have some source of government money. I just wonder if there is an opportunity for the private sector to partner in this, because in most cases, they are the ones who need the people. So should they be partnering and financing some of this? I'm sure there are cases where they do that in some sectors.

So first, how do you feel about that; and second, have you had any experience with that?

• (1715)

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** It would be lovely if the private sector funded some of this. Let me say that our universities, colleges, and employment service providers are not-for-profit agencies, and they are getting donations from the private sector as well, so I think we need to recognize that.

We have one bridging program I mentioned, the pharmacy program, that did receive a fairly significant private sector donation that is sustaining that program into the future, and we're delighted.

The opportunity for the private sector is also there, not just in terms of the financial donation, but also in terms of offering the work placement. I would say that it's a struggle in Ontario for that paid work placement, just as it would be in other provinces. That said, I believe I heard that a bridging program in Alberta was started up there because the employer said, “I'll pay for it. I need the people. I'll pay for it.” I think the measure of the labour market's hunger is the extent to which the employer comes to the table, and they come in different ways and they need to be encouraged to participate as they can.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** I'd like to follow up a little bit on what Mr. Daniel had to say about mentorship and internship.

Has there been any effort to look at a bar or a level they have to reach? For example, a person comes in who is a level 1 intern in carpentry or a level 1 intern in another profession, and the person can move up as he or she is tested. People would be in the workforce doing a certain level of work and would be paid a certain amount of money so that they could feed their families.

The biggest challenge, especially for new immigrants that have not done their homework, is that they get here, have to feed their kids, and yet are not able to go to jobs in the professions they have.

Is there any way we could look at something like that? I know that standards have to be met, especially in the health professions. Probably the biggest reason the health professions have a more challenging time getting people credentialled is the height of the bar, and the bar is high because of the responsibility to provide competent health care to Canadians.

Do you have any comments about that thought, Mrs. Munoz?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** I think the notion of laddering is one that would be very useful. It's not happening.

For example, dentistry, which I'm familiar with, has four different occupations within it. It would be possible to assess people. Maybe a person meets a certain basic requirement and can be an assistant, which is the first level. If the person wants to continue to move up, he or she may take a course or may take more gap training and maybe become a dental hygienist. After another year or two years, maybe the person can move from dental hygienist to dentist. I think that is a good model. I know that's working in other countries in the world. It's not being followed.

There is also a challenge for employers. When employers know that there's a good program, and the people are coming out of the program and have all the competencies they need, they're very happy to support it. Manitoba Hydro supports an engineers program, because they know that they need engineers and that if those people come through the program, they're going to be very good employees.

On another issue, the challenge for employers in non-health occupations is that they can get immigrants to come and do the work. These immigrants can't call themselves by the title of the profession, but they do the same work. There isn't a lot of incentive for employers, particularly in the trades, to really go out of their way to tell people to get their trade qualifications, because they can get the same kind of work done by somebody and pay a lower rate. That's a reality for their businesses. If that's working for them, they're quite happy.

It is difficult. I think the trades and the professions for which you don't need a title to practice are difficult areas.

• (1720)

**The Chair:** You have about a minute.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** One of the questions asked of our witnesses on Tuesday was similar to what you said about ensuring that people coming to this country have knowledge of the expectations. Coming from a provincial jurisdiction, are you doing that? Or are you leaving it to Immigration to give people information about what the expectations are, or even doing some testing in their countries, like the model they have in Australia.

Go ahead, Mrs. Munoz.

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** In Manitoba, the government reorganized things a few years ago, so all of those areas are actually within one department, which has been very helpful. From pre-immigration information to support when people get here to gap training programs to all of the supports for the regulators, it's all done within the same department. It allows for a very dynamic, coherent, and more effective service.

**The Chair:** Thank you, and thank you for that time.

We will move now to Mr. Cuzner. Of course, you can't necessarily share your time, but you can quit early if you like. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thanks very much.

Listen, I wouldn't dare take on the duties of the analysts here, because they do such a great job, but I think we can sum up what we've learned to date. If we can get people to get involved in the process before they get to the country, that's a benefit. If we can get a true assessment as to what their skill levels are, what their language

skills are, that's of benefit. If we can get them access to language training, especially in their particular discipline, that's of benefit. Mentorship is a benefit. Bridging is a benefit. Internship is a benefit.

So we see the path to success, but from witness after witness we continually hear about the frustration. I am working on a file, and everybody around the table probably has similar experiences, as Mr. Butt indicated. I have 500 feet of water frontage on Gabarus Lake, and I have three provincial departments and two federal departments and nobody wants to own it. If we could figure out who owns it, then we can go about straightening out or addressing the problem.

I can't imagine someone coming in from Manila and trying to navigate these waters. It is certainly quite a chore and a task. We know from the vast majority of people who come before a parliamentary committee, when the ask goes out, the answer is usually more money. Whether you are talking health care, transportation, security, or science, it's always more money. Let's take the money out of it and find the way through here.

No, let's throw the money back in. If the federal government were able to say, "Okay, we're going to give you guys this, if your association can get its stuff together and can pull these two or three things in line", what makes it easier to get through the system? If you're looking for money from the federal government, what are the two things you guys can do? I like the idea of the success story of bringing 23 regulators together and coming up with some kind of cohesive assessment tool. That's what we want to find out.

So what are the two or three things you can do to make it easier on everybody, so we can understand the system more thoroughly and advance through the system more readily?

Take it away, girls.

**Ms. Suzanne Gordon:** More money helps, but I would advise the federal government to be very clear about the outcomes that you want. If you want tools for assessment in the regulatory bodies, then I'd be specific that you want all of them to participate and you want them to agree on one tool and implement it. If you're not specific, you will get 23 bodies together and they will have 23 different tools.

I would say, on the money part again, that one of the reasons bridge training programs exist... And in our programs in Ontario, mentorship and internship can be part of that program, that whole continuum of service. They exist because short-term, flexible, intensive training of adults is not what post-secondary education was designed to do. That's why some of the programs aren't eligible for the loans either. So you could have an adaptation of the part-time Canada student loan to make it apply to short-term, intensive, flexible, adult, work-oriented training. And you might help more than just internationally trained individuals: you might help some other people who are facing career shifts.

I thought the idea of a graduated internship was interesting, and the challenge that poses is language. The message to our skilled newcomers has to be that language and communication are so fundamental. So let's encourage people to take the language courses, and let's come up with some innovations for a slightly lower level language qualification like level 5 and 6, and bring those together with our employment services and some work orientation and with meeting employers. That might lead to your graduated internship, which could be an initiative that you could encourage and which could provide other opportunities for the alternative careers we talked about for those who need that option. That's really what we're talking about—language.

The federal government could fund the tools overseas to do a little web test: where is my language if I want to be a nurse? The language might be fine for meeting your neighbours, but it might not be fine in the operating room. So that specialized language and assessment overseas is an information component that I think will be very helpful and might be a role for the federal government to take.

● (1725)

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** For me, the issue is determining what we need to know from these people to be able to feel comfortable that they have the competencies we require to do the job.

I think we're spending a lot of time asking for things that may not be necessary. When I meet with immigrants, they want to show me what they can do. They want to show you what they know. I asked a group of immigrants what they would do if they were the fairness commissioner. Every single group I met with said that they would create a way for someone to show people what they could do. Immigrants say, "Can you look at what I have and tell me what I don't have? I have to meet 10 things and maybe I have only eight. Tell me what I don't have, and tell me what to do to get it".

Right now we spend a lot of time on things such as good character, including on criminal records checks, for example. Everybody who goes through immigration has to go through a criminal record check. If people are here as landed immigrants, they have already done that, yet many regulators ask people to do that—

not in Canada but back in their home country. That costs some people \$800 and takes about eight months. So if you are a nurse and you do that, it takes you eight months of time that you have to be recognized.

Then you write the English exam and you meet the requirement, but guess what? The English exam is valid for only two years, and if the results are already two years old, you go back. By then you have all the other papers they have asked you for and now they say, "Sorry, that exam is already two years old. You have to go back and take that test again".

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time is well up.

I trust you did place all your recommendations before the committee. Have you completed all the recommendations you wanted us to hear? There is nothing left. Do you have any others?

**Ms. Ximena Munoz:** No. I guess I just wanted to go back to the basics and to help, which is what we're trying to do in Manitoba. I work with 31 regulators. I meet with them on a regular basis. We're doing a lot of work.

The challenge is really determining what you need to know in order to feel that these people are competent. I think that's the problem. There are systems that have been in place for a long time. They don't even know why they are asking for certain things.

As I said, when I came in, that was what was being done, so I'm doing it now.

We could strip a lot out of it. The pan-Canadian framework put in a timeline of a year, but it's a year from the time you present the completed application. It takes people three years to get all the documents needed for a completed application.

● (1730)

**The Chair:** I appreciate some of the difficulties we experience.

Thank you, in any event, for your informative presentation.

The meeting is adjourned.







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