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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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Chair: Mrs. Salma Zahid





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• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)):** Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 27 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The Board of Internal Economy requires that committees adhere to the following health protocols. Please maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from others. Wear a non-medical mask unless seated, and preferably wear a mask at all times, including when seated. Maintain proper hand hygiene by using the hand sanitizer provided in the committee room, and regularly wash your hands well with soap. As the chair, I will enforce these measures, and I thank you all for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. I would like to outline a few rules to follow.

Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You may speak in the official language of your choice. At the bottom of your screen, you may choose to hear floor audio, English or French. With the latest Zoom version, you do not need to select a corresponding language channel before speaking. The “raise hand” feature is on the main toolbar, should you wish to speak.

This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair. When you are not speaking, please keep your microphone muted. The committee clerk and I will maintain a speaking list for all members.

With this, the committee is resuming the study of the labour market impact assessment under the temporary foreign workers program.

I would like to welcome our witnesses who are appearing before the committee today. Thanks to all the witnesses who have joined in today.

Today, in our first panel, we will be hearing from the Canadian Meat Council, represented by Marie-France MacKinnon, vice-president, public affairs and communications. We will also be hearing from Aliments Asta Inc., represented by Stéphanie Poitras, executive director, and Édith Laplante, director, human resources. The last witnesses for this panel will be the Canadian Mushroom Growers' Association, represented by Ryan Koeslag, executive vice-president, and Janet Krayden, workforce expert.

The witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks. If there is more than one witness for any particular organization, members can share those five minutes with their colleagues.

We will start with the Canadian Meat Council, and we will hear from Marie-France MacKinnon, vice-president, public affairs and communications.

The floor is yours. Please begin. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon (Vice-President, Public Affairs and Communications, Canadian Meat Council):** Thank you so much for inviting the Canadian Meat Council to testify today.

We represent federally inspected meat processors and packers across Canada. Our essential workforce has kept us fed through this pandemic. This is, in large part, thanks to the many temporary foreign workers who work in our plants.

Committee members, there is nothing temporary about the jobs in the meat processing sector. Our jobs are full time, permanent and mostly all unionized, yet we have a program that is called “temporary”. I know you've heard this before.

Currently, we're looking at over 4,000 empty butcher stations at our plants across Canada. That's actually only a snapshot, considering we only surveyed about a dozen members. This has increased from 1,600 two years ago. We have some plants with a job vacancy of over 20%.

I challenge any other industry or sector to compare the work and the tremendous efforts our meat processors are making for recruitment and retention. Their efforts go above and beyond to try to recruit Canadians, yet we are still faced with this shortage.

Our meat processors pay excellent wages and they are all unionized jobs. Butchers can start at a minimum, but they move up to \$28 per hour. Supervisors can earn between \$49,000 and \$85,000. Again, all wages are union approved. Despite our best efforts, we have this labour shortage.

Trust me, every single meat processor in this country would love nothing more than to hire Canadians. You can imagine the financial and time burden that would be alleviated. Canadians just don't want to work in meat plants. Even our country's top butcher program, Olds College in Alberta, has told us this. Their students don't want to do internships with us, nor do they want to take our jobs.

We're stuck using this temporary foreign worker program. It's the only way to place butchers in rural Canada for meat processing plants. I'd like to point out that every temporary worker we give a path to PR stays in rural Canada with our employers for over 10 years. Our research shows this.

There are extremely limited immigration options for our workers, whose skills and experience in meat cutting are not recognized by the immigration department.

We have a cap issue. The cap, as you all know, is applied to us. We can only hire up to 10%. It's a handful. It may be 20% to fill job vacancies. For the plants that are at 20% job vacancy, with the cap at 10%... You can see how the math just doesn't add up. That is just to fill current vacancies and turnover. It doesn't include any plans for expansion.

We are not allowed to use any other program because our workers don't fit the express entry or the provincial nominee program, which is focused on university education, not meat cutting skills. It's unfair for our meat processors and it's unfair for Canadian consumers. It's limiting our ability to have made-in-Canada protein. It means that more meat is being processed in the U.S. and in other countries. We have more food imports coming to Canada.

If you can picture a beef or pork shipment going abroad to another country, you might as well imagine that in that shipment and in that box there are jobs, rural growth, economic growth and GDP. We're not just exporting meat. We're sending jobs to other countries when we could actually be doing those value-added cuts here in Canada. Plants could expand. This cap is really capping our processing capacity and our sector's growth potential.

We're thankful for the agri-food immigration pilot that we got to launch a year ago, but it's just not working. Limited applications have been processed. We've been trying to correct issues for the past year. Thankfully, we had a good meeting with the minister, and we have a working group that is working it.

● (1540)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. MacKinnon. Could you please move the microphone a little up?

Thank you. Please resume.

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** The bottom line is the cap issue. At the four-month mark, we want our workers to be removed from the cap, so that we don't have to face LMIA renewals and work permit extensions. We hope this will be addressed, but the bottom line is that we've lost a year in a three-year pilot program.

We've had great support from all parties. This isn't a partisan issue. It's an economic issue for Canada. Allowing us more flexibility with this cap is just good public policy. Canada has set an ambitious target to grow its agri-food exports to \$75 billion by 2025.

Meat processors are well-poised to help reach that number, but the roadblock is our cap.

Thank you.

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

We'll now proceed to Aliments Asta, Inc. We'll ask Ms. Poitras, the executive director, to please begin.

You will have five minutes. You can share the time with your colleague.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras (Executive Director, Aliments Asta Inc.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for inviting me here today.

I'm going to speak in French, because I'll be able to tell you more in less time. I speak some English, but not perfectly.

Asta Foods is a family business with 500 employees. We do slaughter and primary processing of pork. We do not do secondary processing. We sell our products to distributors, large grocery chains and further processors, but between 60% and 65% of our production is exported to 35 countries. So a lot of our production is sent to many countries around the world.

We have also invested in pork production. In fact, 50% of the pigs that come to Asta Foods come from farms that we are associated with. We have also invested in a feed mill, a refrigerated meat transport company and several maternity facilities. These investments have ensured the sustainability of Asta Foods.

As I said earlier, Asta Foods is a family business. My father built it after buying out the facilities of a company that went bankrupt in 1982. When we started, we were processing about 300 animals a day. Now we process 4,100 hogs a day. So it's really a nice business. My father is a visionary and he is passing the torch to us. My brother and I have taken over and the transfer is complete.

So it's a business that could really thrive, but unfortunately the lack of workers is very stressful for me. The future is very stressful to me. It's not because the business is not financially healthy or because it hasn't made good investments; it's because of the lack of workers. Right now, I have to throw meat in the garbage because I'm short of workers. I have to throw away a lot of offal and fat, and sometimes even heads, because I don't have enough workers. I'm losing about \$3 million a month. That's not per year, that's per month: that's \$3 million per month I'm throwing away. We are facing a challenge.

At Asta Foods, we take care of our employees. We are a family business. I know the names of all my employees, even though I have 500, because I've been working with them since I was a little girl. We have a lot of Canadian employees, and I want to continue to have them. As Ms. MacKinnon, whom I know well, said, it's very expensive to get immigrants to work here. So it's not the first option at Asta Foods, but they are the ones who have saved us so far.

I admit to being very stressed about what is in store for us in the next few years, and even this summer. It's so bad, I don't even know if I'll be able to maintain production every day this summer. I may have to slow down my production line. Meanwhile, there are pigs piling up in the barns. It's a very stressful situation for producers as well.

In the Lower St. Lawrence, there are several large companies in the same sector. We are far from the major centres, where most of the immigrants are. We can't bus people from Montreal or Quebec City to work here. It's not attractive for them to move away from their families and drive four and a half hours, or nine hours to get here and back.

• (1545)

**Mrs. Édith Laplante (Director, Human Resources, Aliments Asta Inc.):** Excuse me.

Mr. Chair, we had five minutes for both, right?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes. You have one minute and a few seconds left.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras:** I'm going to close on this. There are several large companies in several large sectors, so we need a lot of workers.

I'll yield the floor to Mrs. Laplante.

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** Thank you very much.

Forgive me for interrupting you, Mrs. Poitras.

Good afternoon, everyone. I'll try to be brief.

Despite all of our constant and innovative recruitment efforts, we have a shortage of workers. The temporary foreign worker program is our last resort, but it is not enough to solve our labour problems. It hinders our development and makes it difficult to turnover regular employees and manage retirements.

Our main recommendation is on the limit of temporary foreign workers we can hire. This is the root of the problem, as we indicat-

ed in the brief we provided you. We know that primary agriculture-related positions are exempt from the limit. However, we believe that slaughter activities are a logical continuation of primary agriculture. Without livestock, there is no slaughter, and without slaughter, there is no livestock. So we, too, would like to have this exemption from the limit.

If this is not possible, we would really like to see the current 10% limit increased to 20%, or even 30%. This would help us ensure not only the sustainability of the company and the continuity of its operations, but also its development.

On the other hand, the permanent selection of temporary foreign workers is a problem in Quebec, because the pilot program excludes temporary foreign workers from Quebec. I would point out that 80% of our employees who are temporary foreign workers would like to obtain permanent residency, but we would like to see...

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Laplante. Your time is up. You'll get another opportunity when we go into our round of questioning.

We will now hear from Canadian Mushroom Growers' Association. We will start with Mr. Koeslag, executive vice-president.

You have five minutes, and you can share your time with Ms. Krayden.

**Mr. Ryan Koeslag (Executive Vice-President, Canadian Mushroom Growers' Association):** Excellent. Thanks very much. Thanks for allowing us to speak to the committee today.

The mushroom industry is a very labour-intensive industry. Part of that is because mushrooms actually double in size every day. They require ongoing harvesting all the time. Our mushrooms are grown in climate-controlled facilities in farms across Canada. We contribute close to a billion dollars to the Canadian economy and create nearly 4,000 permanent full-time jobs. We employ 900 workers through the temporary foreign workers agriculture stream when we cannot find Canadians.

Canada's mushroom growers are high tech. We use state-of-the-art technologies to grow the best mushrooms in the world. Because of this, and because of our passionate workforce, we have Canada's fourth-highest produce export. We're actually the second-largest exporter of mushrooms in the world by value.

Our report shows that our mushroom harvesters can earn up to \$29 an hour. Supervisors earn between \$35,000 to \$80,000. These are competitive wages. They are not cheap labour.

Our mushroom farms are constantly recruiting, yet we have around a 20% job vacancy, in spite of all of our efforts. We have a permanent problem, yet we are forced to use the temporary foreign worker program, which is very expensive. Research shows that the cost is close to \$8,500 per worker to bring in our temporary foreign workers, and because of COVID-19, we believe that these costs are even higher now.

We need to continue to use temporary foreign workers to fill these job vacancies for food, because the industry and our workers do not have the same access to immigration programs that other sectors have. For mushroom farms, one of the top immigration barriers for our workers is the education criteria that's in the federal express entry and applied to many of the provincial nomination programs.

I'll pass it over to Janet.

• (1550)

**Ms. Janet Krayden (Workforce Expert, Canadian Mushroom Growers' Association):** Thank you, Ryan.

The main thing that mushrooms and meat processing have in common is that we both provide full-time permanent jobs. For mushrooms, we've been very excited to work on the agri-food immigration pilot with meat processing. We feel that this is a new recognition and inclusion of agriculture within Canada's immigration strategy.

We hope that with Minister Mendicino and this committee's support, we can fix issues to allow more workers to access it.

We met with the department on Friday, and we're very pleased with the progress in some key areas. I also want to compliment Service Canada's Katie Alexander and her department on the LMIA's. They've really turned the department around. It's very helpful to the farm workers and to the farmers.

We're proud of our mushroom workforce, from entry-level harvesters who require six months or more training, all the way up to growers, who know soil science and compost. Unfortunately, this sort of education on the farm is not recognized by the immigration department.

We were informed on Friday that they cannot help us with what we need to make the education assessment more flexible during COVID for our workers. For this reason, we are now asking for an additional immigration path to be opened up within the agri-food immigration pilot, recognizing two years of Canadian farm and plant experience, due to valuable on-the-job training that the workers receive, to replace the education criteria. We know this is possible, because the new pathway to PR program for the 90,000 does not include any education criteria.

We're asking why we can't try something similar within the agri-food immigration pilot to see if we can fill our 2,750 spots.

We're grateful that our occupations are included in the PR program—the new 90,000. This new program will be subscribed very quickly, though, and our workers are not adept at accessing these programs.

We do not want to see timelines for either the main temporary foreign workers or our ag pilot affected negatively by the new PR program. This is because we're already struggling with work permit issues for the agricultural stream within the temporary foreign worker program. We need the immigration work permit extensions to be improved and benchmarked for our agriculture workers already in Canada, because sometimes it drags out for six to nine months.

We thank the department for helping us on a case-by-case basis, but we have a lot of cases. Recent timeline extensions have seen some improvements. We continue to ask for a 30-day benchmark for our renewals and extensions, so that our temporary foreign workers do not fall to implied status and lose their personal ID, which is happening. They are working to put food on your tables and mine.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Krayden, but your time is up. You will get another opportunity when we go into a round of questioning.

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** I'm actually done. Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will now go to our first round of questioning.

Mr. Allison, you will have six minutes.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'll begin with Ms. MacKinnon.

We hear this time and time again. This is not the first time and you are not the first witness to say, "Listen. We could do so much better as an industry if we could just get labour."

I'm always amazed. As a country that produces a lot of raw products, it seems like a travesty to me that we are not doing more value-added, in production, in slaughter capacity and all those things, as it relates to your industry. We're bringing in approximately 400,000 immigrants every year, first-time people working toward citizenship and permanent residents.

However, from every industry we talk to, time and time again, we constantly hear that the shortages are growing. In other words, they're getting bigger and bigger. This seems to be the never-ending issue. As a country we could do so much better if we could get these sector-by-sector plans in place to move forward.

You were talking about that, Ms. MacKinnon. We ship many products to the States that they finish. Do they have the same types of issues? Are they being more flexible? What are they doing with their immigration or their ability to get workers, or are they experiencing the same kinds of problems we're having?

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** To be frank, they're actually experiencing the same problems we have. Everybody has somewhat of a shortage. That's also our problem. If we don't attract those temporary foreign workers to come to Canada.... We have a great country to sell them, and for them to come to and help us grow rural Canada. These temporary foreign workers have other options as well. Our recruiting them and bringing them here, and their helping us by working in our meat plants and building rural Canada, is really what it's all about.

We have this huge opportunity, and Canadians don't want to move to the rural countryside. That's not for everybody. The shortage is there. People say all the time, "Well, you bring them in, they move to urban cities." They don't.

Our research indicates most of them don't. Our research shows that, if you bring them in, and assuming they work out and everything is great and it works both ways—assuming there's a good fit there—those temporary foreign workers stay with our members for over 10 years in rural Canada. They're not moving at the first chance, getting a PR and moving to Toronto, which is what everybody talks about all the time. These employees actually stay with us.

Our situation is not unique, but we have big problem. It saddens me to think about shipping meat abroad when we have the capacity and the industry to process more and to increase our processing capacity, yet we're handcuffed by a labour shortage and by this cap I talked about earlier.

**Mr. Dean Allison:** I think I know the answer to the question, but I'm going to ask you. Should we not be, as a country, looking at sector by sector, talking to the different industries that are struggling and trying to come up with a plan to work with them?

It may be a pathway to permanent residency. It may be something temporary. It may be a combination of things as we move forward. It seems crazy to me that, in sector after sector, we have shortages, shortages and shortages, which means lost revenue, which means lost taxation, which means at the end of the day that we're not competing on the world stage the way we could be if we had a plan, sector by sector, to help out your specific industries with your specific needs.

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** I couldn't agree more. A sector plan is what makes sense. It's just good public policy. Actually, the dream would be to have a division within AAFC, Immigration Canada and ESDC that works together to fill that gap, so that when we're facing a labour shortage....

We're like what Édith and Stéphanie talked about. We're primary processing straight to.... We're all intertwined, from the producer to us. We work together. There can't be backlogs. That means we're losing. Look at how much product Aliments Asta is losing. That's crazy. That's because of a lack of labour.

We can have a labour strategy for our sector, for agri-food, for meat, for anything, but we have to have the three departments work together to come up with a good plan. We need more paths to PR. We need the labour cap removed—or not—or at least hiked a lot more. Let us fill these jobs.

Let us demonstrate to the government what we have to offer and how much we can grow our sector and our exports. It's all there. We just have to tap into it. It would be great for industry to have an opportunity to really deliver on that.

• (1600)

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Thank you.

Janet, I see your hand's up. Do you want to add a comment here? I think I have a minute left, so why don't you finish that minute with what you have to say.

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Thank you.

What you're saying, Mr. Allison, is exactly what the industry's been asking for from multiple governments for many years. They would like to see an agriculture and agri-food workforce program.

We're hoping this new immigration pilot could be a piece of that, but as you can see, we're struggling with the criteria of the program, because the majority of the immigration programs are set up more for urban centres. They call for higher education and degrees. That's what all the point systems....

We want our pilot to be different to allow maximum access, so that we could at least be allowed to fill our 2,750 spots. We're still struggling with the—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Krayden. Your time is up.

We will now proceed to Mr. Regan.

Mr. Regan, you will have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ms. MacKinnon, you mentioned the temporary resident to permanent resident program. That stream has no educational requirement. Are you saying you want to see more programs like that?

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** I'm sorry. I didn't understand the question. I cut out.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Let me try again, and I'll hopefully be speaking loud enough that you can hear me.

You mentioned the temporary resident to permanent resident program. That stream doesn't have an educational requirement. Do you want to see more programs like that with spaces specifically for workers like yours?

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** I think we're reasonable. For the agri-food immigration pilot, for example, the education requirement is often a problem, because it's hard.

In Quebec, with their program, you need a high school diploma from your home country equivalent to Canada's. That doesn't make sense. There's no grade 12 in the Philippines. You bring in a worker who can't demonstrate that, and you're kind of handcuffed.

Thankfully, we got the government to agree, for the agri-food immigration pilot, that a home equivalency would be the same thing. In the Philippines that's a grade 10, and that should be our high school diploma. We need to be nimble. We need to be able to recognize that.

Also, we need to accept them on skills training. When they come here there's no better education than my members teaching them how to do that job. You can have a university degree, but it doesn't mean you know how to cut meat. The skills learned here are really critical.

I'll pass it on to Janet because I think she can really add to this.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Maybe we can come back to her.

I only have a very short time.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Poitras or Mrs. Laplante, do you want to see new, more flexible and faster pathways for workers like those you employ to access permanent residency and fill specific positions?

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** I'm sorry, but I didn't hear the beginning of your question.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** All right.

Do you want to see new, more flexible and faster pathways for workers like yours to access permanent residency and fill specific positions?

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** Yes, indeed. That's what we indicated briefly. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about that, since I didn't have time to do that earlier.

We would indeed like to see more flexibility in the permanent selection of workers, and make it easier for temporary foreign workers to access permanent residency. Currently, for workers, it is difficult to obtain the selection of Quebec. We would like the federal government to step up its discussions with the Quebec government to better coordinate pilot programs.

When a temporary foreign worker obtains permanent residency or begins the permanent selection process, a spot opens up in the temporary foreign worker program. In other words, it gives us flexibility, given the limit on the number of workers we have. People want to get permanent residence in Canada. We all want the process to be faster.

We also need to give these workers the opportunity to reunite their families, through work permits for spouses or study permits

for children, for example. This would help our recruitment and it would help us attract new temporary foreign workers.

In short, we would very much like to see faster processes to bring in temporary foreign workers and to allow them to access permanent residence.

• (1605)

[*English*]

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Ms. Krayden, in your view, are players aware of what the minister announced earlier this week, the new pathways to permanent residency for temporary foreign workers in quite a few occupations? If so, how receptive are players to these measures?

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Yes, they're very receptive, and we're going to be supporting as many workers as possible within the new pathways. However, we are concerned. I've spoken with the immigration consultants, and we feel that it will likely fill up by June. For our 30,000 quota, we're competing against construction and trucking, which also have an immense labour shortage.

That's why we're saying you should make an education adjustment within the agri-food immigration pilot, so that we can also fill up the 2,750 spots. We want to make this more accessible for the workers. We feel their skills and experience on Canadian farms and in the plants should be recognized. It is education on the farm and in the plant that matters, not that they have the right university or high school diploma, which is almost impossible to get right now. The village schools are closed because of COVID, so we can't get anything to the Canadian assessment company.

We're very concerned, and we think there's a primary blockage to our using the agri-food immigration pilot, which we were hoping to use for the 2,750 spots.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** How do the workers become informed about these new streams?

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** That's the other thing. We're hoping for education from the department, and we did ask for that on Friday. We would like them to provide a webinar for the employers, to start with them, before the end of May. We specifically asked for that. Within—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Krayden, but Mr. Regan's time is up.

We will now proceed to Madam Normandin.

Madam Normandin, you will have six minutes for your round of questions. Please proceed.



[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank all the witnesses, whose comments have been very informative.

You brought up an issue the other witness panels have not discussed. Like you, they talked about costs and the lack of predictability for workers and for employers. But you talked about something I think we should start working on as of today, and that's food sovereignty. We have seen the importance of that aspect in the context of the crisis. I would like you to tell us more about this issue, which is at the root of your requests, beyond costs and the impossibility of growing businesses. I would like you to talk about the labour shortage's impact on our food sovereignty.

I would also like Ms. MacKinnon and Ms. Poitras to talk about the impact of that shortage on animal health. Livestock cannot be kept indefinitely without being slaughtered.

Can you talk to us about those aspects, which have not been covered by other witness panels so far?

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras:** I have often discussed that with Government of Quebec representatives. Food policy and food sovereignty are often talked about in Quebec. However, I have made it clear that we will not be able to achieve this as long as we have no workers on site.

Canadian and Quebec consumers want boneless cuts of meat, but we cannot make those available to them, as we do not have enough workers. So we are selling our meat wholesale to other countries, which I find appalling, as we have always prioritized Canada before exporting our products to other countries. Unfortunately, the labour shortage makes it impossible for us to proceed with a secondary processing of meat to meet the needs of Quebecers and Canadians. So that leads to more meat exporting.

You are perfectly right to raise the issue of animal health. As a number of slaughterhouses have been affected by COVID-19, there has been a significant surplus of hogs in Quebec and in Canada. That is still the case, as there have been other cases in our region and in various provinces, resulting in a number of problems. We have even considered engaging in welfare slaughter of hogs, but I don't think that is a solution. Some flexibility in terms of our workers would have helped us. It would have enabled us to address the absences caused by COVID-19 and isolation. There is no flexibility in that respect, and that is very scary.

We have fallen far behind. At Aliments Asta, 30,000 hogs are currently waiting. Every effort should be made to resolve the situation. Employees have had to self-isolate, and we already had no flexibility. In that kind of a context, the labour shortage has really hurt our business.

We are worried about what will happen this summer. Many employees will take time off, and I don't know whether we will be able to carry out slaughter activities every day. This situation is stressing me out on a daily basis.

• (1610)

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Would anyone else like to comment?

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** I would just like to comment on the issues Mrs. Poitras brought up. Aliments Asta is a member of the Canadian Meat Council, but I can speak for all of our members from coast to coast to coast. In western Canada, people are experiencing the same problems Mrs. Poitras mentioned. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that to us. You have all seen the headlines about our meat processors that had cases of COVID-19 and had to close, despite all the efforts they made to prevent infections.

This is a problem for producers. We can no longer recruit anywhere, and we no longer have any flexibility in the system, as Mrs. Poitras was saying. So as soon as a minor labour shortage occurs, as soon as COVID-19 hits and a production chain is affected by the pandemic, it causes a lot of upstream problems for producers and downstream problems for those waiting for our products.

These issues are not unique to Aliments Asta. Companies across the country are dealing with this.

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras:** In closing, I would say that it's not even just a problem related to COVID-19. Summer is coming, and that is becoming an issue because of employee vacations. For me, as a member of the new generation, and for the company's human resources, it is stressful to never know whether we will be able to maintain our operations this summer. It is also stressful for my workers, who must perform miracles to ensure that everything is working. I must say that the upcoming summer is a major source of stress for me.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** You talked about the lack of flexibility.

Ms. Krayden, I see that you also want to answer. I will come back to you right after.

Would the situation improve if you had more flexibility—for example, if work permits or visas lasted longer and were not just closed permits for a single employer, even a single specific position in a given franchise?

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras:** In our case, we want a permit for Aliments Asta, as we do not need to move our temporary foreign workers to other slaughterhouses.

I can let Mrs. Laplante give you more details.

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** The longer the duration of work permits, the more ensured we are of operational stability. After the pilot program ends, we would like work permits to remain of a duration of 24 months, and not 12 months as the case has been over the past few years. That would give us some flexibility for renewals. Red tape should also be discussed. Currently, we must renew work permits every six months before they expire, so we are always buried in paperwork.

In addition to long-term permits, we would like to see permits that, after 18 months, for example, would give us an opportunity to offer our temporary foreign workers permanent jobs, with a closed work permit. That would enable them to take steps with the provinces and not have to double up on those steps. That way, they could apply for permanent selection and renewal under the temporary foreign worker program.

So 24-month work permits would be good, but they should be coordinated even better with permanent selection programs.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Does Ms. Krayden have enough time to comment?

[*English*]

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

We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan for six minutes, please.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses.

From what I'm hearing from everybody, there is a tremendous labour skills shortage in your sectors and you would like to have permanent programs, people who can come and who will want to come and stay.

From that perspective, I'd love to hear from you whether you have any specific recommendations on what that number might be. If the government were to make an announcement on a permanent program for your sector, what would you like to see? What would that number be?

Maybe I will start with Ms. Krayden.

• (1615)

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Yes, for agriculture and agri-food the shortages are immense. Marie-France talked about 4,000. That's what we're talking about for meat processing. The Canadian Agricultural HR Council explained the shortage for the primary agriculture, but we're happy to start with the 2,750 pilot that we have currently with immigration, the agri-food immigration pilot. We just need the fixes done so that we're allowed to fill it.

Last we heard in December, we only had about 150 who were able to use the pilot at this point. The primary recommendation we have is to allow us to make the changes that make sense for the workers and that would allow us to fill the pilot, and to recognize the experience of the two years in the plant and on the farm as an additional pathway, not just the high school certificate in the village school. This is what makes sense for the workers so that we can get maximum usage of our 2,750 spots.

We're afraid they're going to tell us it's not successful, but we just haven't had a chance to use it. We're still fighting to get the right kinds of criteria to support the workers and the farms and the plants so that we can fill those job vacancies. Let us fill the job vacancies and then we can work from there, but help us fix the pilot. That's what we're asking your support for.

We have a joint report that will be distributed, I guess, next week—it's not translated yet—with the meat council and mush-

rooms, explaining our recommendations for the agri-food immigration pilot.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Does anybody else have aspects to add, to the number more specifically, in regard to the program, or are you all in agreement with what has been offered?

**Ms. Marie-France MacKinnon:** I agree with Janet. Clearly, we're very aligned. Beef, pork and mushrooms go hand in hand when you eat them.

The biggest number you have to think about is less about the programming. Yes, we could use more paths to PR, but the options we have now are workable. They're a solution. The agri-food immigration pilot is great. The cap is the number we need to look at, the removal of the cap or allowing our sector to go from 10% to 30%. Let us have a chance to work with what we have, but fill that void with temporary foreign workers by raising the cap. The cap would be a huge solution to our industry.

Édith, do you want to add anything?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Stéphanie Poitras:** Let me come back to what Ms. Laplante was saying earlier. Farms resolved their labour issues once they no longer had to limit the number of workers and were able to bring in workers based on their needs. We feel that, since our activities immediately follow farms' activities, it would be logical to match the requirements.

Why couldn't we—meat producers or perhaps mushroom producers, for example—be considered an extension of farms and bring in temporary foreign workers according to our needs? Our goal is actually to integrate them into society. They generally integrate well.

We view agriculture as a series of activities. Since this is how farms have solved their workforce issues, we could perhaps solve ours in the same way. If not, let's increase the limit to 30%, as I am under the impression that, if it was increased to 20%, we would ask you to increase it to 30% soon.

So that is why we are asking to be seen as an extension of farms. We think that is a logical request.

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** I would like to expand on this, Ms. Kwan.

We recommend completely removing the limit, as our activities are a logical extension of primary agriculture. If not, our second recommendation would be to increase the limit to 30%.

However, permanent selection programs must also be improved, especially in our case. I cannot speak for the rest of Canada, but in Quebec, we feel that better alignment between federal and provincial programs is absolutely necessary.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

I've heard from other sectors as well, actually we all have, with respect to the language testing and how it doesn't make sense and it does sort of cater to university students the way it exists right now. It really leaves a lot of other people out. Should the government get rid of these language testing requirements, especially for your sector?

I've heard it from the caregiver sector as well. Many of the workers who are already here speak the language in a capacity well enough to be able to communicate with the employer, so I don't know why they have to set up these additional barriers for people.

Ms. Krayden.

• (1620)

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** For language testing, it is very true, similar to how the experience in the plant and on the farm is the education the workers need. There also isn't a recognition that, if they're working in these jobs, they are learning English as they're working. That is not recognized.

**The Chair:** Ms. Krayden, I'm sorry for interrupting.

Your time is up.

I see a hand raised by Ms. Laplante.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Chair, I wonder if the other witnesses who want to answer this question could submit something in writing to the committee, because they didn't get a chance to respond before we ran out of time.

**The Chair:** Yes, of course.

If there is anything you want to bring to the committee's attention and you were not able to talk about today, you can always send in a written submission to the clerk of the committee.

We will now proceed to Mr. Seeback.

You will have three minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Whoever wanted to answer Ms. Kwan's question, please go ahead, because I want to hear that answer as well.

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** For us, with the mushrooms, our number one thing is if we could get the education criteria amended. I think it would be very difficult with the department regarding language, but they are increasing criteria both for language and for education in all the provincial nominee programs. They keep saying they're following what the federal government is telling them.

It's very much a hot potato. They don't seem to want to answer why they're doing this. All of this makes it more difficult for our workers. We're looking for more flexibility for workers to allow them more access. That's what we're hoping for.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** Ms. Laplante, I see your hand is up.

Please proceed.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Édith Laplante:** Thank you.

Concerning the pilot program's criteria, since Aliments Asta is a Quebec-based company, we must use the provincial program involving permanent selection. However, it is currently very difficult to meet the criteria for permanent selection. In our case, some 30 Filipino workers have been unable to gain permanent residence owing to criteria related to language, age and education. The pilot program is probably very good for Canada, but we cannot use it. That is why we recommend discussing this more with the Government of Quebec. We have also submitted our recommendations to the provincial authorities.

Our initial concern is more about the limited number of temporary foreign workers than about permanent selection, but I think the criteria for permanent selection must also be a bit less stringent. We just need to be able to recognize years of experience. It must not be forgotten that we also provide training at the plant and, once those people have completed it, they become excellent workers.

We invest in those people's applications, but also in their training. For this to be profitable over the long term, we would like to keep those workers. The criteria, especially those relating to training, could really be reduced, which I think could enable us in industries to deal with those elements to a large extent.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kyle Seeback:** The other issue I think I see is that, when we look at having to proceed with the application for PR, I can see enormous challenges for certain workers who have come here. Talking about some of the things we're discussing—education levels, language—how would you envision that—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Seeback, but your time is up.

We will now proceed to Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Dhaliwal, you will have three minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I agree with Madam Jenny Kwan. When she was saying we have farm workers or those who work on the production lines, I have seen people come to Canada and work on farms. They didn't necessarily have a Ph.D. in English literature or French literature, but they were able to do great work. We did not have that work shortage in those days. Even these days, when people apply to be a farm worker from overseas, what happens is, number one, a condition comes in that they're not established in their country. If they were established, they would not be coming to work on the farms here.

I would like to ask all the presenters here this: Would it be helpful if the companies were able to apply and have those farm workers be given a visa to come directly to the companies, instead of going into the pool and whatnot?

• (1625)

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Direct immigration programs with more incentives to go to the rural plants and farms is what we all want for permanent full-time jobs. Unfortunately, like we keep saying, the temporary foreign worker program is our only option for placements in the rural.... It functions as a placement agency for those who have full-time permanent jobs. We have no other options with how the immigration programs in Canada are set up. The provincial nominee programs provide some options, but their criteria also limit our workers' access, and increasingly so. They're increasing the education equivalency. They're increasing the education criteria. They're language benchmarking to level 4, so they're basically mimicking the express entry program rather than allowing us more access. That's why we have to use the temporary foreign worker program.

We continue to hope the agri-food immigration pilot is going to provide the pathway to PR that we need, but direct immigration with the LMIAs for the full-time permanent jobs, that's what we'd love, if we could work with the government to achieve that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** What difference does it make if we can improve that, even if it needs an LMIA? A farm worker's LMIA doesn't need any visa up front, so that's fine as long as there's the LMIA and the visa process. Then the PR status would not be instant but maybe in two years' time, four years' time or six years' time, so that if a farm worker works on a farm for four to six years, that worker is granted PR.

Is that the kind of program that would help?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Dhaliwal. Your time is up.

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** We'd be in favour of that, yes.

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to Madam Normandin.

You will have one and a half minutes for your round of questioning, and then we will end with Ms. Kwan.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to put my question to Ms. Krayden again, as she did not get a chance to answer it last time.

I would like her to talk about the duration of work permits and visas. She also mentioned that workplace training is not recognized by the department and was, therefore, not a springboard to permanent residence.

Would it be useful for work permits to enable employees to attend training in order to specialize, take on a better job or even learn one of the official languages, which could make it easier for them to access permanent residence?

[*English*]

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Yes, that's actually what we're absolutely supporting. If we could get our on-the-job training, two years' experience recognized, then that would, as another path, even within our current agri-food immigration pilot, give them more access. That's absolutely what we support.

With regard to the duration of the work permits for the agricultural stream, we already have two-year work permits. We're supportive of that. I know that meat processing worked with the department. Marie-France was a big part of that. They have a two-year work permit finally back again. It took them four years—four or five years—to get that back, and it was a lot of work.

Absolutely, we need these two-year work permits. We absolutely support a strong pathway to PR. We support open work permits. We would like them to have some access—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Krayden. Your time is up.

We will now end this panel with one and a half minutes from Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, you can, please, proceed.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I'm going to ask Ms. Krayden to finish that last sentence she was going to say.

**Ms. Janet Krayden:** Yes, we do support open work permits within the agri-food immigration pilot. We were a bit confused as to why it wasn't included in the criteria. Every plant and farm has a handful of open work permits. We also support them for the vulnerable workers, if they have a problem with the employer. What we want is a strong pathway to PR.

We don't support open work permits for everybody when they come, because they have to work to fill the job vacancy. If we have them going all over when they come, then they would not be filling the job vacancy. We need people to produce our food, so that could be a problem. It would also suppress wages for Canadians.

We support the process. They have to work where they have their contracts. After they get their permanent residency—with the agri-food immigration pilot, for example—then they can go anywhere they want with their valuable experience. We support a strong pathway to permanent residency. It's what we need on the farms so that we continue to produce the food and so that the workers can also learn their skills and get experience through the farms.

• (1630)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** One criticism that we've heard from folks is that, when the government announced the new program, the language testing, for example, was already filled up. It was already booked until September, so even—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Kwan. Your time is up.

With this, our first panel comes to an end.

I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing before the committee. If there is something that you were not able to bring up because of the lack of time, you can always send in a written submission to the clerk of the committee, and we will take that into consideration as we draft our report.

With this, the panel comes to an end. I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that we can allow the witnesses for the second panel to log in.

Thank you.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1635)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting to order.

We will resume our study on the labour market impact assessment under the temporary foreign worker program.

I will take this opportunity to welcome all of the witnesses for appearing before the committee. We will be hearing from the witnesses, and each witness will have five minutes.

Today I would like to welcome Mr. Alain Brebion. He's appearing as an individual. We will also be hearing from Living Water Resorts, represented by Larry Law, founder and chief executive officer, and Donald Buckle, general manager and vice-president, resort operations. We will also be hearing from Centre local développement de la région de Rivière-du-Loup, represented by Ms. Bouchard, immigration development officer, joined by Ms. Bérangère Furbacco, immigration development officer.

All witnesses will have five minutes for their opening remarks.

We will start with Mr. Larry Law, representing Living Water Resorts.

You can please proceed. You will have five minutes.

• (1640)

**Mr. Larry Law (Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Living Water Resorts):** Madam Chair, co-chairs, members of the standing committee, thank you for the invitation for us to share our concerns. Joining me is Don Buckle, our VP of resort operations.

I have owned the resort for 29 years. I have invested significantly to expand the resort and create employment for Canadians. Today we offer our guests 445 rooms in the two resort hotels, plus many amenities. Our labour force has grown from 20 to more than 500 in peak season today. We are Collingwood's largest employer.

In 2019, the resort received Tourism HR Canada's Distinguished HR Service Award. Recently, I am humbled to receive the Order of Collingwood, reflecting the ongoing contributions to our community.

This brings me to the heart of the issue. My resort relies on temporary foreign workers. We have huge difficulty hiring local Canadian workers, despite our increased wages, benefits and other incentives. Canadians avoid working at entry-level jobs in the hospitality industry. We have no alternative but to hire temporary foreign workers to perform the job, even if it costs us an additional \$68,000 just for 20 of them. The resort industry has the same reliance on the temporary foreign workers as the agricultural industry, which is exempt from LMIA restrictions.

LMIA instructions prevent hiring temporary foreign workers for low-paying positions in the accommodation and food services sectors when unemployment exceeds 6% in the region. Contrary to these expectations, when Collingwood has a 7.5% unemployment rate, Canadians do not want these jobs. We now have more difficulty hiring for these jobs.

For the committee's knowledge, at the same time, in early 2020, Employment and Social Development Canada introduced legislation prioritizing and waiving minimum recruitment requirements for farm workers and field labour, exempting them from LMIA restrictions.

For our busy 2021 summer season, we need to hire 20 new temporary foreign workers. Without these workers, we will be forced to close 80 rooms. It will cost over \$5 million of our annual revenues with direct layoffs of over 100 of our resort team members, a loss of over \$43 million of retail spending in the community and an increased dependence on government subsidization.

On a related note, we recently completed a \$50 million, 86-suite addition to our waterfront hotel. We are in trouble.

We propose a simple amendment to the 2020 instruction for entry-level accommodation and food services sector jobs. The proposed solution would parallel the priority exemption the government provides to the agriculture industry. We propose getting exemptions in specific tourist regions, including Collingwood, Blue Mountain and Niagara, where we saw proof they are unable to hire local Canadians.

Our proposed solution is endorsed by the Resorts of Ontario and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association. This proposed amendment will reopen a window of opportunity for the temporary foreign worker, thereby ensuring the preservation of jobs for Canadians.

• (1645)

Minister Qualtrough wrote to me saying the department will consider policy adjustments if the situation evolved and evidence warranted. This is the time to do so. Urgent—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Law.

Your time is up. You will get an opportunity to talk further when we go into our rounds of questioning.

We will now proceed to Madam Bouchard and Madam Furbacco.

Both of you together will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Please proceed.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard (Immigration Development Officer, Centre local de développement de la région de Rivière-du-Loup):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the committee for inviting us today.

Our socioeconomic development organization is mandated by the Rivière-du-Loup RCM. The development of immigration services has been our priority for nearly 20 years. We support businesses in the development of their openness to immigration strategies and their workforce recruitment activities. The various agreements we have with the Quebec department of immigration, francization and integration enable us to enhance the support we provide directly to recruited immigrants by acting as a host and integration organization, among other things.

Our region's economic pool consists of about 1,800 businesses. Most of them are SMEs, but there are also international businesses with several hundred employees. The economic dynamism of our businesses, their job growth over the past few years and the growth predicted for the coming years demonstrates the adequacy of using immigration-based recruitment programs such as the temporary foreign worker program, or TFWP, discussed today. We applaud the efforts teams have been able to make concerning those programs since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Based on our experience and that of the businesses we support, we have a few recommendations on this program for you today.

Our first recommendation is to make it easier to recruit temporary foreign workers, more specifically in four ways.

First, the number of professions targeted under LMIA should be increased for simplified processing for Quebec or, better yet, the province of Quebec should be given back certain responsibilities in terms of LMIA analyses.

Second, a facilitated extension system for LMIA and work permits should be proposed, especially when it comes to steps to submit a second, third, even a fourth LMIA application, so that the company can renew a foreign worker's authorization to remain in their current position.

Third, we suggest that red tape be reduced, so that all kinds of staff—be they people in charge of human resources or SME directors—can better understand the steps to undertake.

Finally, criteria related to job postings should be loosened. Some companies have had postings for weeks, months, even years, but they must redo a posting to meet the specific criteria requested and wait four additional weeks to be able to submit an LMIA.

Our second recommendation is about reducing wait times, especially for immigrants who are still abroad. Work permit processing and issuing time frames affect renewals. Sometimes, this leads to precarious conditions and increases those people's vulnerability.

Third, we recommend that the proportion of temporary foreign workers for low paying jobs be brought to a minimum threshold of 20%.

For the rest, I yield the floor to my colleague Bérange Furbacco.

**Mrs. Bérange Furbacco (Immigration Development Officer, Centre local de développement de la région de Rivière-du-Loup):** Thank you.

Our fourth recommendation is along the same lines as the one put forward by Larry Law. We believe workers employed by businesses in seasonal sectors, such as accommodation and food services, should receive the same treatment afforded to seasonal farm workers.

Our fifth recommendation is to provide temporary foreign workers with work permits that are valid for at least 24 months, if not 36. Twelve-month work permits, especially for low-wage jobs, often make renewals problematic.

Our sixth recommendation is to provide organizations like ours with better tools, namely priority access to representatives from the three federal players: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Service Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada. Even though we do not fill out the forms for people or provide such advice, we are often the only place people have to turn for help. In particular, they come to us when the telephone wait times for a customer service representative are seemingly endless and when they receive conflicting advice from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada officers, as happens regularly. Not only does that undermine the institution's credibility, but it also forces us, in many cases, to reach out to our member of Parliament. Right now, 70% of the cases being dealt with by the riding office of the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup are immigration-related.

Our last recommendation concerns the pathway to permanent residence as a means of retaining workers under the temporary foreign worker program. The labour shortage is an endemic problem, so the answer lies in programs that support long-term retention, in other words, improved access to permanent residence in Quebec and Canada.

The occupations that permanent residence programs prioritize do not necessarily correspond to the occupations of workers recruited under the temporary foreign worker program in our regions.

Furthermore, the level of English or French proficiency required to become a permanent resident is much higher than what allophone agricultural workers can acquire in the circumstances; they are low-paid workers recruited for 12 to 24 months. Employees often end up staying for years without being able to obtain stable status or make plans to reunite with their families.

Bear in mind that permanent resident applications for skilled workers take four times longer to process in Quebec than they do in other provinces. The lack of swift access to permanent immigration in Quebec exposes workers to extensive collateral harm and vulnerability. Consider the financial implications and mental burden associated with permit renewal, the pressure that comes from having to keep a job with a closed permit, the inability to access health care at times—

• (1650)

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Ms. Furbacco. You will get an opportunity to talk further in our round of questions.

With that, we will go to our last witness, Mr. Alain Brebion.

Mr. Brebion, you will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Please proceed.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Leif-Erik Aune):** Madam Chair, I believe Mr. Brebion disconnected to try to correct a camera issue. He's not on the Zoom meeting at this time.

**The Chair:** Is he coming back?

**The Clerk:** Yes, he just connected.

**The Chair:** Mr. Brebion, you may start. You will have five minutes for your opening remarks. Then we will go to a round of questions.

Please proceed. The floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Brebion (Reception and Integration Officer, Corporation de développement économique de la MRC de Montmagny, As an Individual):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am in the regional county municipality of Montmagny, Quebec, right next to where my fellow witnesses are. My job is to help with the settlement and integration of temporary foreign workers, and other newcomers, in the region. The bulk of that population is employed in industrial businesses and plants. Not many of them work in agriculture. We are also in contact with the workers, the companies who hire them and community organizations.

Allow me to paint you the employment picture. The region is made up mostly of small and medium-sized businesses. We are not home to big corporations. As is the case in the greater Chaudière-Appalaches area, we have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Quebec. I haven't done any comparisons with the rest of Canada, but our unemployment rate is very low. Many of the businesses still rely on manual labour. They have a long way to go in terms of integrating automated and robotic systems.

Now, I'll paint you the recruitment picture. After looking for workers in the Canadian workforce, businesses came up against the challenges of being in a region, known as regionalization. Notably, the immigrant population is concentrated in the greater Montreal area, Quebec's largest city. For a long time, we tried offering those individuals jobs to draw them to the region, about a three-hour drive east of Montreal. A pandemic, of course, compounds those challenges and makes inter-regional travel complicated, but it is not the only factor.

The reality is we face a greater labour shortage now than we did before the pandemic, and the impacts are being felt by more businesses across many sectors, ranging from stores and service providers to restaurants. These are businesses that did not have the problem pre-pandemic and did not necessarily rely on foreign workers. Consider this: well-known restaurant chain Tim Hortons has been forced to bring in workers from abroad, Madagascar, in particular.

The pandemic resulted in longer processing times across the board, including for renewing permits, obtaining Quebec selection certificates, applying for permanent residence and requesting labour market impact assessments. Those increased wait times created problems. The workers and businesses we deal with regularly share that view.

The region was fortunate in that sectors were not affected by closures, aside from a few production lines. Some workers were, however, laid off, and they had a lot of trouble finding other jobs under the circumstances. Technically, it is possible for them to find work elsewhere, but in actuality, the process is extremely complicated. Even when another employer wants to hire them, without an active LMIA, the worker cannot afford to wait until the LMIA process is complete.

Money was a problem during the pandemic. Of course, we provided as much help as we could to workers, who often struggle with English or French, not to mention administrative jargon. It was hard for them to access financial help, but with our assistance, the system worked fairly well.

In addition, the border closures during the pandemic were especially hard on temporary workers who were supposed to arrive in Canada.

I want to stress, however, that challenges existed before the pandemic. In our view, the temporary foreign worker program is not flexible enough for businesses or workers, at least not the vast majority.

• (1655)

For example, the program makes it virtually impossible for a worker with a closed work permit to change jobs, even though that option might suit both the employer's and the worker's needs. Of course, it is possible to request an open work permit for vulnerable workers, but the circumstances do not always present as difficult and critical. In some cases, the employer may just—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Brebion. Your time is up.

We will now proceed to our round of questioning, and you can talk further.

We will now start with our first rounds of questioning, which will be of six minutes each. We will start with Mr. Dowdall.

You will have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to take an opportunity to thank all the witnesses today for their testimony, not just their testimony but their suggestions that would hopefully come to light.

I'm very fortunate that Living Waters is in my riding. I'm fortunate to sit in here today. I just want to say to anyone who gets an opportunity to go up there, it's a world-class resort. As you heard in the testimony, certainly Mr. Law and his organization have won many awards. I just want to quickly highlight another one and congratulate him. I know that Mr. Law on the weekend got the Association of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs Lifetime Achievement Award, so congratulations on behalf of everyone in Canada. That's a huge achievement. Congratulations.

Mr. Law, in your opening remarks, you referenced the priority status the government enacted allowing the agriculture industry to hire temporary foreign workers without the LMIA review. I'm just wondering if you or Mr. Buckle could explain if that similar priority status exemption would provide the relief that you and certainly members of the Canadian resort industry as well would need. Would that exemption enable you to open all your rooms this summer? We know this is going to affect Canadian jobs as well. We need to make sure that you're open.

**Mr. Donald Buckle (General Manager and Vice-President, Resort Operations, Living Water Resorts):** You're absolutely right, and thank you for the question.

This is a very urgent and crucial matter for the resorts as we gear up for our summertime. If we had the same exemption that's allowed to agriculture...and it should be considered the same as agriculture.

We understand that it's difficult to find workers in the agriculture industry because the job is tough. There are a lot of people who just don't want to do it. Unfortunately, we're the same in some of the classifications within the hospitality industry. Being a cleaner for our guest rooms is tough work and people just don't apply for that, but foreign workers are happy to do that work for us and allow us to operate, which, again, as I mentioned, is urgent because summertime is our crucial time economic-wise to recover any funds for all the time we've been closed.

It's the busiest time of the year for us, July and August and September through October. It's our busiest time. It's when we're able to really earn the most dollars to be able to continue our operations successfully throughout the year. With the length of time it takes to get through the LMIA.... Again, it's very urgent, so that would be a quick resolution.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** I think it's imperative probably as an organization. Often some of these decisions are made by us as politicians and we need to hear from the ground. It's even in our offices that these will come up.

Can you just give me a quick overview of what it's really like to try to find employees in our Collingwood area? We need maybe a regional approach.



• (1700)

**Mr. Donald Buckle:** We've tried every-which-way, out-of-the-box thinking when it comes to trying to recruit for our team. We start off with the LinkedIn, Indeed, the ads and job fairs. We work with the colleges, and we work with Service Ontario. We do referral programs. I've reached out to areas outside of Collingwood. We're willing to bus people into the resort to try to get employees. I've had people busing in from Barrie, which is an hour away from the resort.

As I say, we're full of progress. We've worked with agencies. We've done everything we can to find employees. If I do a job fair, I'm lucky if 10 people show up. Out of the 10 people, I'm lucky if two people come for an interview. Again, when they discover what the role is.... It's a tough role, and that is what has put us into the crisis we're in today.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Mr. Buckle, I have another question. I know new policies roll out and how that affects these businesses. I'm just wondering, in your role as general manager and vice-president of resort operations, I would assume that probably Employment and Social Development Canada has reached out and conducted some thorough consultations before enacting this policy change to the 6% employment cap in regions, and certainly in ours. I know it's everywhere in our region. It's a key problem. I'm just wondering where these temporary foreign workers would be hired.

Can you outline what kind of consultation you had from the government?

**Mr. Donald Buckle:** As the largest employer in this area, I had no consultation. Nobody approached me to see how the unemployment rate and the 6% cap would affect our business. There were no discussions. I'm also a member of ORHMA, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, and through that, where I sat on the board, there were no consultations directly with me in this area.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** I don't have a whole lot of time left, but I just want to know what this decision does.

I know we had an outline from Mr. Law in the beginning. For the actual town of Collingwood to not have the ability to bring in these temporary foreign workers, what does that mean on the ground for all of the people who are living here now who either work near a resort or live here in Collingwood?

**Mr. Donald Buckle:** Collingwood is a destination. We're dependent on the visitors who come into this area. It supports the local businesses and the tax base here in Collingwood as well as our outlying sister areas like Blue Mountain Resorts, which is right next to us.

Last summer Blue Mountain, for example, could only open 50% of their rooms, which is a huge loss to tourism in this area. Because we can't accommodate people, they're not able to spend all that money in the local economy. Those local mom-and-pop shops are very dependent. Again, their main earnings are in June, July, August, September and October. That's when they make the monies that help them survive.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Buckle. The time is up.

**Mr. Donald Buckle:** You have my apologies.

**Mr. Terry Dowdall:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** It's no problem.

We will now proceed to Ms. Dhillon.

Ms. Dhillon, you will have six minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

My first question is for Mr. Brebion.

The need for skilled workers in Quebec is far greater than the corresponding immigration levels allotted by the province.

If Quebec were to raise its targets, do you think it would have a positive effect on wait times and the long-term retention of workers?

**Mr. Alain Brebion:** Thank you for your question, Ms. Dhillon.

When it comes to the country as a whole, what makes things complex is the fact that the provincial immigration levels encompass a number of populations. The skilled worker program is unfortunately undergoing some changes, for various reasons, including the actual administration of the system.

What we are seeing is that the skilled worker program is not doing enough to produce the number of workers we need. Consequently, people who really want to come to the country often bypass the system, so to speak. For example, they can apply through international mobility programs, which allow them to come to Canada and become permanent residents, albeit a bit more slowly. That is also true for temporary workers, who can go through a program available in Quebec called the Quebec experience program. Although the program was reformed, and the requirements are now a bit more stringent than they were previously, it is available and some workers still take advantage of it.

You're right to bring up the issue. The phase we are in now is a bit more complex. For a few years, we had immigration levels that were tied to the situation at the time, but some of the reasons have to do with the system itself. Those factors combined mean that the labour shortage cannot be easily overcome, even with an increase in the number of temporary workers—something that should probably happen regardless.

• (1705)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Thank you, Mr. Brebion.

Now I will turn to Ms. Furbacco and Ms. Bouchard. If I have enough time, I'll come back to Mr. Brebion.

As you may or may not know, Quebec's premier, Mr. Legault, just gave a virtual talk on mass immigration to the Conseil du patronat du Québec. According to him, it is possible to adequately meet Quebec's labour needs in the agriculture and agri-food sectors in the short and medium term, without relying on immigration. Do you agree with him?

What is your take on his comments, given the labour shortage you currently face?

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard:** I must admit I haven't had a chance to listen to the premier's speech or consider what he said carefully. We have clearly seen a desire to bring in many immigrants to work in areas like technology. However, the practice of bringing in only people with very high levels of academic achievement is hard to square with the labour requirements in Quebec. There is no denying that better alignment with the reality on the ground is needed.

It's also important to view immigration through more than just an economic lens. For many years, the approach has focused on administration, but it is definitely time to switch to a more human approach. I've met hundreds of people from other places who have taken totally different paths. It's about more than simply welcoming workers; we are also welcoming human beings and families whose structures, life journeys and experiences all differ. Their impact on communities extends well beyond their economic contribution.

I will leave it there, so Ms. Furbacco can comment.

**Mrs. Bérangère Furbacco:** I agree. What immigrants contribute to municipalities extends well beyond the economic sphere. The benefits that come with workers and their families settling in our communities are significant. The advantage to the survival of local school systems and services is undeniable. Food services, banking services and services for the aging population all come to mind. I should point out that roughly 30% of residents in our regional county municipality are 65-plus. Rural municipalities need to be able to accommodate people who will meet different types of needs.

I'll share a personal anecdote with you. I, myself, am one of those candidates who may not have been selected had the criteria been different.

A huge number of people right now are waiting for their applications to be processed. As others have pointed out, Quebec and federal authorities should communicate more, so we can find ways to help those who are waiting become permanent residents sooner and to solve the labour shortage in the regions.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Mr. Brebion, is there anything you'd like to add?

**Mr. Alain Brebion:** I completely agree with what Ms. Furbacco just said.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Brebion. The time is up for Ms. Dhillon.

We will now proceed to Madam Normandin.

Madam Normandin, you will have six minutes. You can proceed, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here and sharing their insight today. Thank you, as well, for the very clear recommendations you've provided. I'd like to discuss some of them.

Ms. Furbacco and Ms. Bouchard, you talked about streamlining the LMIA process and possibly handing the responsibility over to the Quebec government to avoid duplicate processing.

If Quebec were solely responsible for managing the process, do you think it would better serve Quebec's regions and address some of the realities they face? Certain areas of Quebec's workforce come to mind, as do certain regions that have generally lower unemployment rates.

● (1710)

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard:** A desire to use regional lists has already emerged, to be sure. Naturally, having three players involved complicates the process to no end. I am referring to the two levels of government as well as Employment and Social Development Canada. The idea of transferring certain responsibilities to Quebec is being considered. That would allow the program to better align with regions' needs, make use of Services Québec's lists—which are very up to date—and be responsive to employers' needs. That's important because realities in the regions can certainly give rise to gaps on the ground.

We launched an awareness campaign around the immigration process and the various conditions. We reached out to 150 businesses in our regional county municipality, 40 of which were considering hiring immigrants in the medium term. Given how complex the different systems are, only five, six or seven employers were willing to take on the responsibility of going through the red tape.

A Quebec-based liaison could help explain the process and make it less burdensome.

As I said earlier, 90% of the 1,800 businesses in our jurisdiction are small and medium-sized businesses. That means it is up to plant management to go through the LMIA process and all the other steps. Supervisors are the ones filling out the paperwork, not human resources personnel, so a change like this could streamline the process.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Ladies, I have another question for you. Mr. Brebion can answer as well.

What do you think of having sector-specific work permits, so for an occupation, or even regional work permits for regions with a known labour shortage? That might encourage new immigrants to leave Montreal on a large scale for the regions.

**Mr. Alain Brebion:** I am wholly in favour of that idea. I would even recommend a sector-based and region-based work permit. It's clear from closed work permits that it would be very beneficial if workers could change jobs within a given sector or a predetermined occupation. The current system sorely lacks flexibility, and in most cases, employers suffer just as much as the workers do.

Businesses often call for a system like that, particularly because it would help them manage peak production capacity. Workers need to earn enough income to live adequately, so they often have to work overtime. They are authorized to work for only one employer, which can be a barrier for them. For instance, instead of having to put in 200 hours a week, they could work for two employers, as per a specified agreement. That would be one way of giving employers and employees more flexibility.

As you suggested, employees would no longer be tied to a single employer; rather, they would be tied to a sector. The issue of who would cover the employee's travel costs would have to be dealt with, among other things, but that could be worked out among the employers, perhaps in consultation with the worker.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Mrs. Bouchard, do you want to add anything?

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard:** I can attest to the enthusiasm of some companies for being able to share labour. Some don't have the opportunity to apply for an LMIA because their employees receive EI for a few months at certain times, while others could benefit from people related to LMIAs. The hotel companies in our community have already had discussions about sharing a certain pool of potential candidates. I think that would be interesting.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

You talked about helping people understand programs. Yes, members of Parliament do get a lot of requests of that nature in their offices. I've surveyed my colleagues, and at least 40% of the files they deal with are immigration-related. Sometimes it's as high as 80%. Even we, at times, have a hard time getting the information.

If a business-only hotline were set up, would it be more important to you to have an agent on the line providing general information or an agent with access to the files who could help with specific issues based on the files?

My question is for Mrs. Furbacco.

**Mrs. Béragère Furbacco:** It would be very interesting to have access to people who understand the files that companies or sometimes employees deal with as well. As I said, we sometimes had to deal with people who didn't have access to the files, and the answers weren't consistent with what we had read. We could call up to two or three times without getting identical answers from the clerks. It would make things a lot easier if we had key contacts who were very familiar with the files and who would be there not only to guide but also to reassure businesses and employees in their process. We know that companies and candidates abroad who are

working on these files can wait eight, nine or sometimes 14 months before they arrive in the country—

• (1715)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Furbacco, I'm sorry for interrupting, but time is up for Madam Normandin.

We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Kwan, please proceed. You have six minutes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for their presentations.

On our last panel, pretty well every employer and industry representative raised concerns about the language and educational requirements. They were saying that they don't fit the needs of their employees in their pathway to permanent residency. I'm wondering whether this is a concern for you as well.

This question is for all of the witnesses. Maybe we can start with Mr. Law.

**Mr. Larry Law:** I think it's really important to have good intentions. However, at the same time, consultation is very important for understanding the business in a particular region or a particular profession. That would be the ultimate thing to do.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Do any of the other witnesses have comments on my question about language requirements? If not, I'll move on to another question.

Ms. Furbacco.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Béragère Furbacco:** To complement what other groups of witnesses might have said, I would like to point out that we have many employees who, upon arrival, can work in different languages without difficulty. However, the language level required, which is seven out of eight in the case of Quebec, does not facilitate access to permanent residence. This often puts a damper on stabilizing the situation of individuals and their families, because they have to renew their permits two, three or four times.

It would be really interesting to look at the language criteria, given that some of these people already speak three or four languages and manage to get by very well in their daily lives.

**Mr. Alain Brebion:** I just want to add to what Mrs. Furbacco said.

We know that the level of French required for the Quebec selection for permanent residence is very high. Even some applicants who are native French speakers have failed the exam and therefore could not justify it. This is an important point.

That said, it must be understood that, unlike other Canadian provinces, the concern is not only that candidates be able to communicate at work and elsewhere, but also that they be able to integrate into Quebec society, identify with and be accepted by the population. The language problem is very complex, as you know.

For the time being, the level required, especially for temporary workers, is too high to facilitate their efforts to obtain permanent residence.

[English]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much. That's definitely what we're hearing, consistently, from many representatives, both workers as well as industry.

On a different note, with respect to permanent residents we have a high need and reliance on the temporary foreign worker program. What is clear is that there is a shortage of workers. What are your thoughts about having the government bring in permanent resident status streams right from the beginning, so that we can actually increase the number of workers in the respective sectors across the board and so that we're not so heavily reliant on a temporary stream?

Does anybody want to take on this question?

Go ahead, Mr. Buckle.

**Mr. Donald Buckle:** I would love a pathway that would allow temporary foreign workers to move towards permanent status, and if they were streamed into, for example, the low-wage sector, which is what we're actively seeking and they were able to come across to work towards a permanent residency, I think that would help reduce the number of temporary foreign workers required.

We did have a group that came to us from Mexico, for example. Unfortunately, they were part of a human trafficking ring, and we helped rescue them with the local authorities, the OPP. They were temporary workers at that point, but we brought them all in, we put them all into housing and we housed about 45 people. We gave them jobs right away. Their language skills were not good, not very strong. We have a very strong Spanish-speaking community here in Collingwood. A Spanish club actually helped them. My resort manager has given them English as a second language courses to try to help them, because they're now applying for that permanent residency pathway. Honestly, they've made this area their home at this point. They're very much a part of our community.

• (1720)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Canada used to have an immigration stream that targeted high-skilled, medium-skilled and low-skilled, the full range of workers to fit the needs of the labour market here in Canada. Would you support Canada bringing back such an immigration stream?

Does anybody want to take this question? No...? Okay—

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds, Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I will simply say that many of the other employers on the other panels actually said that they would support this stream. Thank you.

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

With this, our first round of questioning comes to an end. We will have two minutes for each party for the second round of questioning before we end this meeting.

We will start with Mr. Hallan. You have two minutes for your round of questioning.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses.

I just want to congratulate Mr. Law on a very successful career. Ultimately, that is Canada's success as well.

Mr. Law, as a person who formerly came from the construction industry and as a small business owner, where do you see the red tape and how do we reduce that so that employers like you can succeed? How can we help you succeed in Canada?

**Mr. Larry Law:** Thank you so much for your question.

I think the communication between the government, especially the local government, if this is a local issue.... If this is a foreign issue, the different levels of government should have constant consultation. In construction, as you know, there's a great shortage as well. Why can't we do something constructively with the trade schools and all these kinds of things, holistically, in education, as well as importing the trades and professional people from overseas? No one seems to be.

The more I want to do something in the country, honestly, the more I feel the need for the government's power. They need to be understanding. They need to be the leader. They need to understand what is needed so that they get on and do it. Timing is an issue. It's very frustrating. As entrepreneurs, we are just there to do a job, but somehow the policies and all those kinds of things, which I don't know anything about.... This is really my heartfelt comment on it. It's about timing, understanding and also communication, a willingness to do the job: less politics, but more getting the work done.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Thank you so much for that. It's too bad to hear that your company, the biggest employer in your region, wasn't even consulted by this government. I hope they listen and move forward, so that they can do that in the future with you. I think that's really important.

Would anyone also like to comment on red tape? I know you guys are very familiar with that stuff.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, Mr. Hallan. Your time is up.

If any of the witnesses want to speak about this, they can always send in written submissions. We will definitely take that into consideration.

We will now proceed to Mr. Sidhu.

Mr. Sidhu, you have two minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for joining us here today.

I know Minister Mendicino is extremely hard-working. He always checks in with stakeholders across the country. I wanted to take this time to thank him. I remember that, shortly after the election, he came down to Brampton, met with key stakeholders and heard some advice from them. Thank you to the minister for being so proactive.

My question is for Madam Bouchard or Madam Furbacco.

The maximum duration of employment for TFWs in the low-wage stream has increased from one year to two years. Have employers in your municipalities taken advantage of this change? Has it been helpful to have longer-term TFWs to avoid retraining and orienting new employees, in addition to seasonal workers?

• (1725)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard:** For some food processing companies, it has certainly been beneficial. As I mentioned earlier, a few international companies use the various programs, but in our community, it is mainly small businesses and food processing industries that use the TFWP. So far, few companies have been able to take advantage of the new measure, but it is definitely a step in the right direction. We've seen a lot of LMIA's and one-year permits. There have been cases where, two or three months after the person's arrival, we've already had to start new processes. This measure will certainly give our businesses an extra boost.

[English]

**Mr. Maninder Sidhu:** Thank you for that.

Madam Chair, I believe I have 10 seconds left.

I will just take this opportunity to thank you all again for your insights. It was a very important meeting to be a part of. Thank you again for being here.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Sidhu.

We will now proceed to Madam Normandin.

Madam Normandin, you have two minutes for your round of questioning. You can please proceed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

I will also take the opportunity to thank the witnesses.

I wanted to ask a question along the same lines.

Would the duration of work permits and LMIA's be extended for everyone, given that, year after year, it is usually the same employers who apply and the same employees who return?

You also talked about making renewals easier for trusted employers, for example. What did you mean by that?

**Mrs. Stéphanie Jeanne Bouchard:** I was talking about businesses where the employees aren't able to meet the Quebec government's French criteria to be selected.

I believe the previous panel included representatives from Aliements Asta, based in Saint-Alexandre-de-Kamouraska. The company hires several workers from the Philippines, who have been constantly renewed every four, five or six years. Of course, the processes should be made easier for such employers, who systematically need to use the TFWP, or take into account that such-and-such a person has been working for the company for four or five years.

We are working hard to strengthen the tools people can access so that they can reach certain thresholds in French. Even in the food processing field, they may or may not be eligible under the National Occupational Classification. So they can stay with the company for a long time.

It would certainly be interesting to consider the fact that an LMIA has already been done for the person in question and to consider it in future analyses.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Perfect. Thank you very much.

I don't think I have any time left for another question.

[English]

**The Chair:** Madam Normandin, you have 15 seconds.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I'd have time to ask a question, but not get an answer.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will now proceed to Ms. Kwan.

You will have two minutes, and with that we will end this panel. Ms. Kwan, please proceed.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just have a quick question.

The minister announced the 90,000 spots for TFWs. I'm just wondering whether or not you have any thoughts about that. Are those numbers sufficient to meet your industries' needs?

I'll open that question to everyone. If anybody wants to answer, they can put their hand up.

It seems like nobody has an opinion about that.

Maybe I can ask this question of you, Madam Chair. At our last committee meeting, I asked whether or not we can actually have the Hong Kong study report ready for Friday, so that we can be in a position to look at dealing with that report the following week. I wonder if we have an answer on that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Kwan, for raising that. I have checked with the analysts and the clerk. We cannot have the report back from the translation bureau by Friday. The earliest we can get it is the 14th. If it comes early, I will notify the committee, but the date I have for when it will be back from the translation bureau is May 14.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I see. From that perspective, the earliest opportunity for the committee to look at that report would be May 26. Am I correct?

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Yes. I've worked on a calendar, so I've tried to bring committee business.... The calendar will be sent to you by the clerk. As soon as we have the report and the timing we can best work out for the next committee, we will have consideration of the draft report on that.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you.

I would urge that we try to get to that report as soon as we can, because the situation in Hong Kong is very urgent. Literally, by the day—

**The Chair:** Mr. Clerk, do you have any date that we are thinking of for consideration of the draft report for the Hong Kong study? If you could let the members know....

**The Clerk:** The first meeting after the 14th is Wednesday, May 26. Monday, May 24, is not a sitting day. Ms. Kwan is correct. The only way the committee could consider the report sooner would be if the committee met outside of the usual meeting block.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Is there any opportunity for that, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** I will have to look into it and see if there is any availability. I will review the calendar with the clerk. I will notify members about that at the next meeting.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** With that, today's meeting comes to an end.

On behalf of all the members of this committee, I really want to thank all the witnesses. You have provided very important testimony towards the study that we have undertaken. Thank you. It was a great meeting. If there are any clarifications you want to provide, or if there is something that you were not able to say because of the shortage of time, you can always send it in a written submission.

With that, I thank everyone. The meeting is now adjourned.

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