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Auditor General:

Ministry of Children,
Community and Social Services

1st Session
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Wednesday 3 October 2018

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Mercredi 3 octobre 2018

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTSCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES
COMPTES PUBLICS

Wednesday 3 October 2018

Mercredi 3 octobre 2018

The committee met at 1232 in room 151, following a closed session.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome. I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order.

Before we begin, I would like to highlight to committee members that this committee still has not received a response from the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, regarding the recommendations in a report tabled by the committee during the previous Parliament, back on May 1, 2018.

The standard deadline—for the new members, just for your information—for responses to the recommendations in our committee reports is 120 days from the day that the report is tabled. The deadline for their response was August 29, 2018. They wrote a letter to our committee Clerk indicating that they would like an extension until November 15, 2018. I wanted to let the committee know that I will follow up with them and ask that they get their response to this committee in a timely fashion.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): I believe we have a subcommittee report to discuss before we hear from our guests today. Would somebody like to read it and move its adoption? MPP Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: Yes, Madam Chair. Your subcommittee on committee business met on Monday, October 1, 2018, and recommends the following:

(1) That the subcommittee be authorized to make selections from the Auditor General's reports for consideration by the committee;

(2) That both the government member and the official opposition member on the subcommittee be allowed to make an equal number of selections.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you very much. Can you please move adoption of the report?

Mr. Norman Miller: And I move adoption of the report.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you very much. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour? Seeing none opposed, I declare the motion carried.

2017 ANNUAL REPORT,
AUDITOR GENERALMINISTRY OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITY
AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Consideration of section 3.13, settlement and integration services for newcomers.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): We are here today to consider section 3.13, settlement and integration services for newcomers, from the 2017 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. We have a number of people here from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services with us today to answer the committee's questions.

Thank you for being here with us today. I would like to invite you to introduce yourselves for Hansard before you begin speaking. You will have 20 minutes for an opening presentation to the committee. We will then move into a questions-and-answers portion of this meeting, where we will rotate back and forth between the government and the opposition caucuses in 20-minute intervals. You may begin when you're ready.

Ms. Janet Menard: My name is Janet Menard, and I'm the deputy minister for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. And with me I have—

Ms. Maureen Buckley: I'm Maureen Buckley. I'm the chief administrative officer for the ministry.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Cindy Lam, assistant deputy minister for the ministry, for the citizenship and immigration division.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: I'm Yvonne Ferrer, director of programs in the citizenship and immigration division.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. Please proceed.

Ms. Janet Menard: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to address the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As mentioned, I have with me Cindy Lam, ADM, citizenship and immigration, and Maureen Buckley, our chief administrative officer, who will help me with these questions.

I would like to begin by providing an overview of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the work that we do. First, a bit of context about the changes our work has undergone.

On June 29, with the swearing-in of the current government, the work of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration was transitioned into several other ministries as

part of a larger reshaping of the government of Ontario. Immigration policy and programs were transferred to the newly created MCCSS. That's what I'll call us; it's shorter. It was at this time that I assumed these responsibilities as deputy minister.

As part of the same government reorganization, the former Ministries of Children and Youth Services and the Status of Women were also incorporated into MCCSS. Today, we have a very large ministry which employs approximately 6,500 staff. The ministry supports women, children, youth, families and persons with autism and other developmental disabilities through a range of supports that include social assistance, child welfare, youth justice and immigration policy and settlement programs for newcomers and refugees.

As an aside, we also oversee the Family Responsibility Office, which enforces family support orders.

The new ministry creates new opportunities to serve people with a newcomer lens. Whether it is social assistance, children and youth services or women's issues, newcomers should be supported in all aspects of our work. Our programs help Ontarians recover from hardship and regain control of their lives.

Our programs help adults with developmental disabilities live, work and participate in communities. Our programs help women fleeing domestic violence and victims of human trafficking. They also strengthen families and help children and youth overcome barriers to their success and well-being.

Programs to help immigrants and refugees settle and succeed in their communities are a very natural component of this work. They provide orientation and settlement assistance, language training and employment supports to help newcomers integrate successfully and contribute to society and the economy.

We deliver these services in partnership with a wide array of organizations, including settlement agencies, school boards, post-secondary institutions, employer groups and regulatory bodies.

There is a common tie that bonds all programs within our ministry; that is, to deliver the best possible outcomes to Ontarians who face barriers or need support to fully participate in community and economic life.

Achieving better outcomes is also the purpose of the Auditor General's work. As always, we found her recommendations extremely helpful and we take them to heart.

Ontario continues to be the top destination for immigrants when they come to Canada. We receive more immigrants than other provinces or territories. They choose Ontario for many reasons, including job opportunities and to be reunited with family.

1240

Immigration has always contributed significantly to Ontario's economic performance, and we welcome the diversity and cultural enrichments that newcomers bring to the province.

In 2017, Ontario welcomed over 110,000 immigrants; 18% were refugees. These individuals have left their home countries, sometimes under difficult circumstances, to

build a better life for themselves and their families. With low birth rates and an aging population, we need them to sustain our labour force and ensure continued economic development and prosperity. Northern and rural communities have also called for increased immigration to address demographic and labour market challenges.

Over the next 25 years, immigration is expected to account for virtually all of the growth in the working-age population and to be the main source of Ontario's labour force growth. In fact, today immigrants account for nearly a third of Ontario's labour force. This is higher than any other province in Canada and higher than the national average.

Nearly three of every four working-age immigrants arriving in Ontario has a post-secondary education, and over half have a university degree. In spite of these credentials, recent immigrants have lower earnings compared to Canadian-born residents. In 2017, the unemployment rate of immigrants who have been here for less than five years was 9.9%, which is nearly double that of people born in Canada, at 5.7%. Yet, a recent report by Business Development Canada found that 40% of smaller companies are struggling to find workers. If we are to address labour market gaps and newcomer integration and success, we have to do better. The recommendations in the Auditor General's report will help us get there.

Our ministry's goal is to deliver the best possible outcomes in all that we do; but newcomers face unique and often additional challenges, including language proficiency, credential recognition, obtaining Canadian work experience, and discrimination. Governments have a role to play in facilitating newcomer settlement and integration, in partnership with the private sector, service providers, community organizations and other stakeholders. It is in Ontario's long-term interest to provide settlement supports early so that newcomers can overcome barriers to integration, prosper and succeed quickly.

Currently, we are working to integrate all of the programs and services I mentioned into the newly created MCCSS. As we do this, we know it's important to turn the lens inward and focus on areas where we can improve our work, with the goal of achieving the best outcomes for the diverse groups of people we support. To do this, we are currently looking at the programs and services to determine the best way to incorporate foundational changes that benefit the entire human services sector. As deputy minister, my focus must always be on ensuring that our programs and services are efficient and impactful to people and their well-being.

This brings me to the recommendations for the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, listed in the Auditor General's report. The findings and the 10 recommendations to address them focused on several broad themes: reducing duplication with the federal government, accountability and performance measures, raising awareness of newcomer services, and inter-ministerial partnerships.

Ministry staff have been working hard to address the concerns raised in the Auditor General's report. Work is

well under way on all 10 recommendations, with all deliverables due to be completed in the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Committee members have been provided with copies of the work undertaken to date. So instead of reading the detailed list, I will focus on several key highlights of the progress so far.

A key recommendation relates to working with the federal government to better coordinate services and reduce any potential service duplication. This is important because in Canada, immigration is a shared jurisdiction between the federal government and the provinces and territories. The federal government is primarily responsible for selection and admission of immigrants and refugees to Canada, with federal and provincial governments together having a complementary role regarding the settlement and integration of immigrants who come into our communities.

I'm pleased to say that we have made significant progress on this front. Recently, we signed the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. This five-year agreement formalizes the partnership between Canada and Ontario on immigration matters by outlining the roles and responsibilities of both governments. Key provisions include collaboration on newcomer settlement and integration. It also recognizes the importance of sustaining settlement programs with fair and stable funding. In addition to this agreement, we have signed three related memorandums of understanding with the federal government. Collectively, these serve to reduce duplication and gaps in provincial-federal programs for newcomers and refugees.

We are already seeing the results of these formalized agreements. For example, we have begun to map federal and provincial services across the province. This will help us identify areas of duplication or areas where there may be gaps in service. With this information, we will be better able to align federal and provincial services to ensure they are complementary and that newcomers have improved access to the services they need. The information-sharing agreement that we negotiated with the federal government in May 2018 will also facilitate the exchange of information to support our programs and assist with research and evaluation. We will have additional data on federally funded settlement services in Ontario.

We have also begun implementing a ministry-wide data strategy that will enhance the quality, reliability and timeliness of data to support decision-making and improve outcomes in policy and programs. In addition, we are working with Statistics Canada to link several federal and provincial databases. These linked data sets will be available next March, giving us additional information about immigrants and refugees who settled in Ontario. One example includes their reliance on social assistance. This data will allow us to conduct analysis on immigrant outcomes and provide insights into the supports that are effective in achieving long-term successful outcomes and, of course, into areas for improvement.

Data has been called the oil of the 21st century, and we are certain it will continue to be a valuable tool to inform

policy, programs and service delivery decisions for the ministry.

1250

The Auditor General also recommended engaging in discussions with the federal government regarding the federal funding allocation in Ontario. At present, federal settlement funding is allocated for services in provinces based on the number of immigrant landings. Although some adjustments are made to address the higher and longer-lasting needs of refugees, these are inadequate, given the large number of non-economic immigrants coming to Ontario.

We are continuing to advocate to the federal government for further adjustments in consideration of this. Additionally, Minister MacLeod tabled a request this summer to the federal government to cover the estimated \$200 million in costs to Ontario to support asylum-seekers. Information on service use and client outcomes will be tracked to inform discussions with the federal government and to advocate for a fair share of funding to improve outcomes for Ontario's newcomers.

Another theme of the Auditor General's recommendations relates to program accountability and performance measurement. The ministry values sound program management accountability and transparency and is working to put systems in place to address these recommendations.

We are currently reviewing our processes for allocating funding to service providers. This will establish minimum score thresholds, identify processes for better documentation of funding decisions, and include criteria in the assessment of service provider proposals to ensure that funding is commensurate with the value of services provided. By the end of the year, we will have revisited standards and guidelines to guide future funding application processes.

In light of the government's current fiscal environment, we are particularly aware of the need to ensure that our programs allocate funding cost-effectively and to services that demonstrate good client outcomes. To this end, we are also enhancing our performance measurement and monitoring systems to ensure that services provided are cost-efficient and timely and that they meet newcomer needs.

We are working with our internal audit team to develop systems for verifying the accuracy of service and financial information that our funded agencies report.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Ms. Menard, I just want to let you know that you have two minutes left in your presentation.

Ms. Janet Menard: Thank you.

This could be through spot checks, audits and site monitoring activities. A natural outflow of this will be the establishment of key settlement and integration milestones. Once established, these milestones will serve as a road map to set performance indicators and targets to measure the outcomes of specific services provided to newcomers and refugees.

To ensure that newcomers are aware of the services available to them, we have translated website material into 26 languages and published them online. This settlement

information ranges from practical advice on how to open a bank account in Ontario or register children in school to more detailed information about accessing settlement and employment services.

Finally, given that newcomers access services through multiple ministries, we value a whole-of-government approach to supporting newcomer integration. To that end, we are building on existing partnerships with several ministries to obtain information on service use and to explore opportunities to increase access to government services. We plan to add structure to existing cross-government partnerships, through formal agreements and other mechanisms, that would facilitate information-sharing and inter-ministerial coordination. An inventory of provincial programs and services that support newcomer integration will provide us with a baseline of existing programs and services to build on.

On behalf of the ministry, I would like to thank the Auditor General, her staff and members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We are very excited to take on the important work of ensuring immigration continues to enrich Ontario and keep it prosperous.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you very much, Ms. Menard. That's 20 minutes. We'll go to the government side for questions. Who will start?

Mr. Norman Miller: Oh, okay. Sorry. I thought it was the opposition that was going to start.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): I was told that I can mix it up.

Mr. Norman Miller: Very good.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Would you like the opposition to go first?

Mr. Norman Miller: No, no. I'm happy to go first.

Thank you for your presentation. Let me begin with the scoring aspect that you were talking about, because it seems like a number of the newcomer settlement service providers had their contracts renewed regardless of what score they received. I guess if you could talk about that a bit and why the scoring didn't seem to matter in terms of whether their contracts were renewed. It seemed like the status quo was renewed and whether they got a high score didn't matter. In fact, the top 20 rejected applicants had an average score of 81% while the bottom 20 funded projects had an average of 53%.

Is there a reason previously funded applicants received funding over the higher-scoring applications?

Ms. Janet Menard: Thank you for your question. Let me start, and perhaps I'll turn it over to ADM Lam to provide more detail.

Proposal scores are just one of several factors that the ministry takes into consideration when we allocate funding. An organization's past performance, the language in which they deliver the services, the geographic area that they cover and the newcomer groups that they serve are all factored into our decision-making. We strive to ensure that services support early settlement and are available and accessible in multiple languages in communities across the province. In some communities, there may only be one organization that delivers those services. So, rather than

rejecting their proposal, we work with them to build their capacity to ensure that we're not compromising what is needed in the community.

Maybe I'll stop there and see if Cindy has something to add.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: At what point do you stop working with a service provider because the results just aren't there? How long does that take?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Whenever those decisions were made to fund organizations that had lower scores, we would put additional conditions on those organizations and to monitor them closely. Then, even though there is a need, if they were not performing, we would have to stop, and we have stopped funding a few organizations in the past for that reason. But the initial reason of keeping them going or funding them was mostly to meet a certain need that we feel is out there, whether it's regional or community or language or some other factor.

Having said that, we have been implementing the auditor's recommendation to be more rigorous, not just in documentation but also in setting minimum scores and minimum standards, and, if there were an exception, to really very closely look to see if the organization should be supported.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. I just want to let committee members know: Please raise your hands so I can identify you for Hansard prior to speaking. Are you continuing your line of questioning, MPP Ghamari?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: No.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Surma? Who wants to speak?

Mr. Norman Miller: If I can continue, I'll try to hand it off to my colleagues, who are all very keen, which is great.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Very much so, yes.

Mr. Norman Miller: They have lots of questions.

For organizations that failed to meet their targets and received a low proposal score, it seemed to be the case—that seemed to be the norm. So why did the past government fund these projects?

1300

Ms. Janet Menard: I don't know that that was the norm. Sorry. Perhaps you can—

Ms. Cindy Lam: Through the audit, there were instances where that was found. Certainly, it was not the operating norm. It wasn't something that we would follow.

We looked at each batch of proposals and we did try very hard to make sure that every region and corner of the province where there was a demonstrated need—for it be served, and then to closely monitor those organizations.

Mr. Norman Miller: If you're funding the status quo more so than looking at new participants, did that mean—I mean, my colleague this morning, in closed session, was asking about language and learning. In Mr. Rasheed's riding, his constituents were complaining about not having services in the language that was appropriate for them. If you're staying with status quo suppliers, it would seem to me you're not being as flexible to address changing needs. Can you talk about that a bit, please?

Ms. Cindy Lam: We did have renewals. I will call them renewals—no; re-funding. But going forward we're going to be, as you see in the report, establishing more monitoring, more controls.

Also, our process of allocating funding will be improved to look more closely at new organizations that may be identifying new needs, and also to compare service providers and to compare proposals. You may have two organizations fitting to serve the same group, perhaps in the same community, and then we would look at those more closely.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'll maybe let Mr. Rasheed—I know he was interested in that topic this morning, in closed session.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Rasheed.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, everyone.

To continue to MPP Miller's point, I come from a riding where we have seen a huge increase in refugees, especially from the Middle East and everything. I have a huge number of newcomer institutes, service centres, in my riding. But one thing that bothers me is the fact that I visited these newcomer centres and I've had many meetings with them, and the staff over there is not diverse.

For example, if somebody comes from the Middle East, doesn't know the language, wants to go to these newcomer centres—which the public, the taxpayers are paying for—and they're not even getting the service, why should we be funding these newcomer centres?

And it goes both ways. I've visited newcomer centres where I've seen staff completely the opposite as well, and I have raised the same point. I said, "This is Canada. You have to have a diverse"—you cannot have just one. Then it becomes like a family business. We are not paying people to run family businesses.

So how are you going to handle this thing? Because if we are paying this amount of money to these services—I'm sorry, but if they're going to come to me, I'm going to say, "I'm not going to help you until you show me something that you are really doing for these individuals."

Thank you.

Ms. Janet Menard: Thank you for your question. I'm going to defer that to ADM Lam.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Organizations were selected based on a number of factors: their ability to deliver, whether they have the expertise. But the question of language is a very, very important one.

Going forward, in redesigning the allocation and the assessment-of-proposals process, we will be paying attention to that, as to what the staff composition is. If they are proposing to serve a certain region, then we would be looking at the demographics of that region, including what language needs there would be.

That's something that we would take note of and incorporate into the next set of criteria as well as the assessment process.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you.

Ms. Janet Menard: But can I infer that you're making the recommendation that as we invest in organizations

across Ontario, we ensure that those organizations are hiring people from the groups that they are there to support, as part of their process?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Absolutely. As I said, when I go and see the staff members, it's easy to see that people are not going to be comfortable dealing with them, because they cannot even speak the language. Somebody who is a refugee or coming from these countries—the very first thing they want to see is someone who can speak their language, and that's not happening. So all the funds that the taxpayers are paying are basically not helping anyone at the moment. I have 40 or 50 of these newcomer centres in my riding, and it's just not working out. People come to me and complain about it.

Ms. Janet Menard: I thank you for the comment; I think it's an important point. I also think it aligns with our goal of economic success and attachment to the labour market. So there's that component to it, as well. Thank you. It's certainly something we'll take to heart.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Wai was also going to weigh in. Are you continuing, MPP Miller?

Mr. Norman Miller: I know that MPP Ghamari had a follow-up on the same line of questioning.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Please, go ahead.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My understanding is that the RFQ process is a yearly thing and organizations have to apply every year in order to receive funding and to know whether they're going to continue or not.

Just to put this in context, my mother has worked at a newcomer settlement agency in the York region area for the past 10 years. So this is something that, just on a personal level, my family is very familiar with. Speaking to your point, MPP Rasheed: She's responsible for the Farsi-speaking outreach program. That organization has various outreach programs where they make sure that whoever is running it speaks that particular language. It is way more helpful, in that sense.

Going back to my question: What is the rationale behind having yearly RFQs instead of, let's say, three- or four-year RFQs?

Ms. Cindy Lam: The last RFP took place in 2017-18, and they were three-year contracts, actually. We have heard the burden it placed on people to be applying every year. As soon as you get your contract, you basically have to start preparing for the following year. That's why they are now currently three-year.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: When was that change made?

Ms. Cindy Lam: This round, which is—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Lam: The recent round?

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: No. We've actually had three-year contracts for at least eight or nine years—for quite a while.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Is that for all service providers or just a particular—what's the one-year versus the three-year?

Ms. Cindy Lam: There were instances where there were project-based RFPs. Those would be one-year because they were project-based. It wasn't the type of base

funding that an organization would need. But for NSP, newcomer services program, it's three years.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: You mentioned that you're already reducing the duplication between federal and provincial. I want to understand what steps you have made.

In fact, I have a few questions here—maybe one at a time, and then I'll come to my next one.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Regarding duplication: This is under the settlement and integration memorandum of understanding with the federal government that we recently signed.

Miss Kinga Surma: When did you sign?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Late 2017. November.

We are now, together, mapping services. Realizing that we do both fund settlement and integration, we are mapping the services across the province to identify duplication. That's the work that we're engaged in right now, to see where we both are and where we are maybe together and whether or not it is a duplication of service.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I heard this morning that—let's say if a new immigrant comes in, if that happens to be going into a place that is federally funded, they will get it under the federal budget. Otherwise, if they go to another that happens to be provincially funded, it will be provincial funding. Why is it so messy and how can we, as a province, control what can come out of the federal budget or into our budget—not only the duplication, but even in excess of the funding, so that we can have better control of it?

1310

Ms. Cindy Lam: Identifying where the services are and mapping them would be the first step, if we could just have a good picture of the province and where the services are, federal and provincial. Currently, when a newcomer, a learner, gets assessed in a certain community or area, they would be assessed for their current proficiency level and then would be advised as to what course would be right for them. If they're in a certain location and there's a federal course that offers their level, they would be referred to that course. If there is a provincial course that matches their level, they would be referred to that course. Sometimes they don't exist in the same places; the levels are differentiated between the two programs. That may be why you could end up in a federal course or a provincially funded course. But the assessment is based on a learner's proficiency and not the source of the funding of the courses. That's why they experience it that way. The learner needs to go to a course, and they are advised as to what course they go to.

I appreciate your question, which is, how can we manage this so that there isn't this experience or perception of confusion?

Ms. Janet Menard: There are some programs that aren't federally funded, there are some services that aren't federally funded—for instance, immigrants who have become Canadian citizens or asylum seekers waiting for a determination. But permanent residents are funded through the federal government. So it's not a duplication for all services. They work in a complementary fashion.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Wai, do you want to continue?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Yes, I have another one which is also based on funding. This is to understand how the previous government allocated the funding based on the needs of new immigrants. We want to understand how the previous government had been doing it so that we know what else we need to improve on or work better on.

Ms. Cindy Lam: The annual budget is approved by the multi-year planning process. The settlement and integration budget hasn't changed a lot; it has changed slightly from year to year. One year it was increased slightly because of the arrival of a large cohort of Syrian refugees, and that's when we saw a bump. And then—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Sorry to interrupt. I just want to let you know the committee has two more minutes on this cycle.

Ms. Cindy Lam: I will speak quickly.

And then the funding is used for the various programs in settlement and integration. Traditionally, there is a budget for newcomer settlement services, another one for language training, another one for interpreter services, another one for bridge training, and so on. We have been allocating based on those budgeted amounts.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): You still have a minute and a half. Do you have a last question? MMP McDonell?

Mr. Jim McDonell: One of your staff said that almost 9% of the newcomers under five years are unemployed. When you look at new grads, as an example, they're even higher. I'm wondering if there's something we're missing, with the trouble with getting people into employment. That's a group that I think is around 15% or 13%—new grads coming out of university or post-secondary. Is there some collaboration that could be worked on together in a project to see if there's some benefit to both groups in trying to get employment? Actually, they're somewhat better than we have—just with Canadians getting employment when they first go out into the job market.

Ms. Janet Menard: Is your question related to foreign students?

Mr. Jim McDonell: No, that would be Canadian students as well.

I guess my point is that anybody entering the workforce seems to have a very high unemployment rate, and then, with our own Canadians, it's even higher. Is there something we could tailor our programs to look at—the issue, really, would be getting new people into employment. It seems to be common right across the board.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): I think I'm going to have to stop you there. Maybe we could return on the next cycle, please.

We'll now move to the opposition side. MPP Lindo?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you very much for the presentation. I have some general questions that I'm hoping you can help me to better understand.

I know that one of the recommendations was to try to document what a healthy settlement looks like, so that you had a more concrete goal. Would you be able to speak to

us a little bit about what that looks like or how far you've gotten with that?

Ms. Cindy Lam: I believe it's the recommendation to look at milestones for settlement and integration so that you would know, if your purpose is to help people settle and integrate, when you consider someone integrated, or at least, what the milestones are. We're in the process of addressing that recommendation. We are looking at research. We're looking at other jurisdictions.

We are also going to be participating in some consultations with our settlement service providers, newcomers, and these structures that are called local integration immigration partnerships, that are around the province. They consist of various groups, providers, employer associations, individuals and so on. That will be a very important source of information in determining this question.

Our plan is to have a set of milestones that we can work with, not just so that we know, but so that we could be guided by those milestones in designing the programs, in evaluating and monitoring the programs, and in allocating funding.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Just so that I am clear: Right now you're still in the process of documenting what those milestones will be.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: With that being the case, you had mentioned earlier in the presentation that the goal was to have addressed all of the recommendations by March. Would it be all of them? All 10?

Ms. Cindy Lam: The latest date we have on the report is the second quarter of 2019-20, so not quite by March. Some of it would have to stretch out halfway to the next fiscal year.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Okay. I'm also wondering—this one's going to just sort of come out of nowhere—there was a secretariat, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's refugee resettlement secretariat. Does that still exist?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, until the end of March.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: So that's until the end of March.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Okay.

Ms. Janet Menard: That was temporarily put in place to support the surge of Syrian refugees into Ontario, to support their settlement and integration.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Within that secretariat, have there been—for want of a better word—"milestones" as well, so that come March, we have a sense of how well the new Syrian community members are doing in their communities, or what kinds of needs might be there?

Ms. Janet Menard: I would say they've done great work with data, analyzing information, and they put in place some things that we will be using in the future. So, yes, we will have that information.

But some information that they collected that I think speaks to this question and your prior question is around the comparing of data between people on social assistance and CRA.

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As an example, they actually took a cohort aged 20 to 25 who were on social assistance and looked back over a 10-year period to see how well they were faring. They looked at economic immigrants, refugees who were government sponsored and refugees who were privately sponsored to look at the differences. And actually, the economic immigrants did very well and literally none of them after 10 years were still on social assistance. Many were employed, many were running their own businesses and a subset even had assets—not assets but investments. We saw a high percentage of privately sponsored refugees—under half, but still a lot—were still on social assistance, and more so for those that were government sponsored. So those who were government sponsored were faring less well.

We could conclude that those who are government sponsored also come with greater challenges, but I think it gives us an opportunity to look at the services and supports that they receive while they're on social assistance to see if there are things that we can do differently. Perhaps we can make sure that some of the English- and French-as-a-second-language training that we're investing in is targeted to those groups. Because we know that English or French differentiates your success; if you don't speak the language, then you're less likely to have success.

I point to that because I think it gets at your question, because success is not—it can be defined in many ways, but I think a basic starting point is that if you're still on social assistance after a number of years, you're less likely to be achieving all of the other indicators—health, wellness, integration in the community—that are important to us. It also speaks to the benefit of us as an integrated ministry.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have one more question before I hand it over to my colleague. In terms of that, when you have been looking into milestones etc., have you been trying to find ways to think through social determinants of health, then? I know that new immigrants coming to the country are coming under various circumstances; there will be a lot of diversity even in experience, so it's not like a one-size-fits-all opportunity for programming and such. But I'm curious to know whether or not that's being taken into consideration since we're quite early in the development of those milestones.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, absolutely. Currently, even in the services that we fund in newcomer settlement, there is an emphasis on helping people connect to the services they need, and health is definitely one of the services that people would need. That is in our awareness of what newcomers need when they access services. So then, if we're looking at milestones, that will necessarily have to be a domain that would be taken into consideration—whether or not they are accessing and attached to health services and how much of a difference that makes in terms of their success or integration.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for your presentation. I have some specific questions about bridge

training. There was quite a bit in the auditor's report about bridge training programs—some very interesting findings.

First, the auditor points out that funding for bridge training has decreased despite successful program results. She also pointed out that because of this reduction in funding, there are very few new programs being funded. She found that there were 53 applications for new bridging programs; only five of those new applications were funded, and a number were moved to a wait-list for approval.

My question is, what is happening with funding for bridge training programs? Overall, they seem to be successful. The auditor points out that over the last three years, an average of 71% of those who completed bridge training programs were able to find employment in their field. Given the successful outcomes associated with bridge training programs, what is happening to that funding and what is happening to these applications for new bridge training programs, which obviously seem like they would be valuable?

Ms. Cindy Lam: If we go back to the beginning of your questions—did you want to know about the budget as well?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Both, the funding and the applications. She says that there were 53 applications. Only five were funded. A number were moved to a wait-list for approval.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Firstly, on the funding: There was a decrease overall, partly because we had a contribution agreement with the federal government where they actually, I guess to put it simply, gave us the money so that we could spend that money on bridge training. The province also matched that amount as part of the contribution agreement. When that was over, we no longer showed the federal money. The federal government decided that they were not going to transfer the money to the province and they were going to spend it directly themselves on the province, on their bridge training project. That explains part of the decrease. If we include their funding, then it wasn't really a decrease in terms of how much money was spent on bridge training in Ontario.

This year, we did get a new investment of \$7 million added to the base budget. When we launched the call for proposals, there were proposals that were outside of the ones that were already in progress. But in general, bridge training projects sometimes can be more complicated, depending on what occupation it is that they're targeting. Sometimes it would take a longer time to find out whether or not the project was successful and whether the people achieved the outcomes that they were meant to achieve. The decision at the time was based on the investment that was already made, and whether we want to take it out further, to see that we could have a comprehensive picture of whether or not that program worked. That was part of the decision-making process.

There are others that were assessed that may have been outside of the budget. It was decided to continue supporting the ones that had started to make sure that they had the best chance of succeeding, by extending them. These other ones were then put on a wait-list.

Going forward, we will have to look at—and we have committed to doing that—the results of the projects that are currently being funded and perhaps look at other areas and expand into other occupations if it is time to end an investment in something else. It also depends on whether there is a demand. If a demand can be demonstrated, then I think at some point, we will have to say, "Let's look at something new. There are other worthy projects." That's definitely what our intention is going forward.

Ms. Janet Menard: If I can just give you a little bit of factual information: The 2018-19 budget allocation for bridge training is up to \$24.6 million. We're currently funding 38 organizations that deliver 67 bridge training projects. The program serves an average of 6,000 skilled immigrants annually, providing technical training—technical skills assessment; Canadian occupational requirements; licensure exam preparation; soft skills, so workplace professional practices, communication skills; internship and clinical placements; mentoring and professional networking; and also employer, regulator and institutional engagement—to help parties in recruitment, on-boarding, retention, career development, credential assessment, recognition and mentorship.

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. The auditor did raise concerns about the 17 proposals that were funded to renew existing bridge training programs, that some of those proposals were much lower-scoring than the proposals for new programs that were brought forward through the application process. Are there criteria being put in place to ensure that the bridge training programs that score the best and look promising in terms of delivering outcomes are the ones that will be funded?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes. This would be the same for the entire suite of programs. As part of the review of the settlement and integration program that we are undertaking to respond to the recommendations, but also because it's necessary for the program, we will be looking at how we allocate minimum thresholds and so on. What I said about the newcomer services program would also apply to bridge training. But we would be working with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities from now on, because the program has been transferred to that ministry, based on the new cabinet.

But the audit results and the recommendations—we are briefing our colleagues on these, and we definitely will be working together going forward on the proposal process.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Further questions?

Ms. Janet Menard: If I can just add, the measures of success for bridge training are in two areas: the licensure rate, so the number of participants or the percentage of participants who achieve licensure in their regulated occupation; and secondly employment rate—the rate of participants who complete the project and obtain employment in their field or a related occupation.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. A follow-up, MPP Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: One more bridge training finding from the auditor's report: There were significant differences

in the results among bridge training service provider contracts completed in the last three years, and there hadn't been follow-up by the ministry to assess those differences.

You talked about the measures of success. Are you looking at the body that's delivering the training programs? Is that part of the new process that's being put in place?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, to assess their performance. But also, related to another recommendation, we're also going to be comparing costs between service providers to assess whether or not it's reasonable.

Currently, bridge training projects do vary, because some of them do different things. Some occupations that are targeted, like optometry, require a lot more work. Sometimes it includes lab work or coursework, and it also depends on the number of participants. That partially accounts for the range in cost—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. There are two minutes left in this cycle, just so you know.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Okay—in cost per participant. But yes, we will be looking at that, whether they meet their performance targets, as well as looking at comparisons between, as recommended by the auditor's report.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: And just a very quick follow-up on that as well: When you're looking at outcomes for new immigrants who are participating in these programs, is there already or will there be—I'm not sure where you're at—communication with the anti-racism strategy, so that the newcomers aren't being held accountable for issues like racism in the workplace and discrimination in the workplace?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, we realize that newcomers face a lot of barriers, some of them, and discrimination is one of them. In our consultations we will be looking at that factor as well.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Sorry, I just want to be clear, though: not just in the consultations. When you're thinking about your evaluation of programs, is there a way or is there the intention to make sure that those evaluations incorporate the fact that somebody may not be able to access a job even after doing the program, even after scoring quite well, but they can't get into the workplace because of racism in the broader society?

If you are attaching funding decisions to whether or not a particular organization leads more new immigrants to get jobs, but they can't get the jobs—it has nothing to do with the organization; it has to do with racism outside of it—I would be concerned that really strong organizations will lose funding because there's no eye to potential discrimination or discussion about what that looks like for new immigrants.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Oh, I see—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. We're going to have to leave it there for the next cycle. I'm now going to go to the government side. MPP Miller.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a question: Do we get another time slot after this?

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): You will. We can go right to 3 o'clock and then whatever time is left over, we'll just divide that in half.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay, but we allow some time at the end for discussion?

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Yes.

Mr. Norman Miller: So it's like 2:45 that we—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): That's right.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. Thank you. Also, I want to give notice that I would like to move a motion—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Okay. Please read that into Hansard.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. The notice, which the Clerk is copying now: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts request the Auditor General conduct a value-for-money audit of the costs associated with illegal border crossers as it relates to all services provided through the government of Ontario and its municipalities.

I believe everyone should have a copy of that.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Copies will be distributed by the Clerk. This motion, though, will be debated at a further meeting, not today.

Mr. Norman Miller: Sure, yes.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): But we should all receive copies of it.

Mr. Norman Miller: Super.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you, and now you can move into your 20-minute cycle.

Mr. Norman Miller: Okay. Thank you. I'm going to ask questions, and I think MPP Surma has a follow-up, and then MPP Ghamari after that.

The deputy, I believe, mentioned that Minister MacLeod has been quite active and vocal about the cost to the Ontario government of dealing with illegal border crossings. The number that she has talked about—and she's looking for support from the federal government—is \$200 million. I'm just wondering how you calculated that \$200-million figure.

Ms. Janet Menard: Sure.

The \$200 million includes \$74 million that was calculated for the temporary housing that was necessary in the city of Toronto, so that information came from them. Additionally, the province provided \$3 million to the Red Cross to support refugees who were staying in college dorms during the summer. We offered up that space. That had to be vacated when students went back to school, but that was provided to the Red Cross to support asylum seekers while they were in those residences.

Additionally, there was \$12 million associated with costs out of the city of Ottawa.

We estimated \$90 million in social assistance costs. It's very difficult to be precise in this area because it's not information we gather when someone applies for social assistance. We know if someone is an asylum seeker; we don't know the way in which they cross the border. We can talk to you a little bit about that dynamic, but if someone crosses at a non-port of entry and then registers with Canadian Border Services, then they all become one category of asylum seeker. So we made some assumptions to come up with the \$90 million.

In addition to that, we estimated \$20 million for primary and secondary education spaces.

That was a point in time. That was then, and we will go through another process to update that information.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you for that information.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Surma?

Miss Kinga Surma: Thank you very much. MPP Ghamari, bear with me. I have a few questions, but I'll try to get through it as quickly as possible.

How many cases did Ontario Works have in 2016 and 2017?

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Ms. Janet Menard: We had 252,000 cases.

Miss Kinga Surma: Out of all those cases at Ontario Works in those two years, how many cases involved illegal border crossers?

Ms. Janet Menard: Again, it's difficult to be specific. We can talk about the number of clients who were born outside of Canada. Some 33% or about 84,000 cases were on social assistance where the primary applicant was born outside of Canada. Some 10% of those cases, about 26,000 cases, were situations where the primary applicant was a recent immigrant, and by "recent immigrant," we mean within the last five years.

We have to start with the bigger picture and then start narrowing down the information. We can also make some assumptions by looking at the number of asylum seekers who come through the border and also by looking at the number of interceptions that are made when people cross at non-ports of entry. It gets a little bit complicated and it's not a precise science, but we're doing our best to do fairly thorough projections.

Cindy, I don't know if you want to add something.

Miss Kinga Surma: Is it possible that there are illegal border crossers who are receiving social assistance but they no longer reside in the province of Ontario or live outside of the country?

Ms. Janet Menard: Is it possible that they've come into Ontario and left Ontario?

Miss Kinga Surma: But they receive social assistance.

Ms. Janet Menard: No.

Miss Kinga Surma: No? Okay.

Ms. Janet Menard: We have pretty tight rules around social assistance. It would be difficult to be collecting social assistance and be outside of the country.

Miss Kinga Surma: Okay. And I have a couple more questions, but I'll start with something that you presented earlier. It says that 25% of newcomers who attended ministry-funded language training in the past school year had been in Canada for more than 10 years and 45% had been in Canada for five years or longer. Can you please speak to this item, why it's so high?

Language training is a big part of what settlement services does. It obviously helps the newcomer integrate into society. These numbers are somewhat shocking. That's such a high percentage of newcomers who have been living in Canada for five or 10 years and are coming back. Does that not indicate that the language services are not effective, are not working?

Ms. Cindy Lam: If we talk about the type of learner that might be, not only does Ontario get more immigrants than any other province, we also get more of the non-economic immigrants than anybody else in Canada. These would be folks who may be refugees. They may be family reunification, people who come to join their families. They may be families of economic immigrants, the principal applicant. They may have greater needs than those who were selected for their human capital, including their language abilities. This is a group that would be the non-economic immigrants.

Another reason may be because our eligibility is not limited to people who are not yet citizens, so folks who come to the classes may already have been citizens, which means they've been here for more than four years but they continue to show up and that's why you would see that stat.

In terms of whether the language training courses are effective, we are looking at that in all this work in addressing the recommendation and in reviewing our program. That's another component that would add to solving that question of why there are people who have been here for many years and who are still showing up at language classes.

Miss Kinga Surma: Okay. That shifts me to another direction. It was mentioned in your presentation earlier that Canada and Ontario depend on new immigrants to address labour market shortages. Can you indicate which labour market shortages you're speaking of?

Ms. Cindy Lam: In looking at that, we work closely with training, colleges and universities when it comes to our own information and our programs, as well as the program that is now transferred to economic development, which is the provincial nominee program. But in general, the Ministry of Finance actually does the projection about population growth and what is needed, and it's from them that we have the stat about almost 100% of the labour force growth coming from immigrants.

From my experience, we continue to need people in the high-skilled and tech sectors. We also continue to need people—and more and more we're hearing that—in the sort of middle-skill or lower areas.

Miss Kinga Surma: I'm sorry, middle-skill?

Ms. Cindy Lam: It would be the middle-skill areas.

Miss Kinga Surma: Which is what exactly?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Well, there are some in construction. There are some in agriculture. I know that we frequently have requests from the hospitality and tourism sectors for consideration in selecting provincial nominees. It actually does go across the spectrum. I can't be more specific right now in terms of the ranking of the needs, but these are the sectors that we have come across.

Miss Kinga Surma: Well, if part of settlement services is to assist newcomers in bridging that gap and finding employment, obviously preferably in something they have a background in, then isn't this information kind of critical, where we do have those labourers?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes.

Miss Kinga Surma: Okay. So how many non-economic immigrants did we have come to Ontario in 2016-17, and maybe in this last year, 2018?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yvonne is looking up the exact number, but last year we had over 110,000 immigrants in total, and 30% to 40% of those were economic. I actually have it right here: 36,000 to 37,000 in family class, 20,000 in refugees, so that's 56,000 or 57,000.

Miss Kinga Surma: So about half of the immigrants who come into Ontario are non-economic.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes.

Miss Kinga Surma: Okay. My last line of questioning: It was also mentioned in our presentation earlier that there are some challenges in terms of the data that we collect. Can you please explain the process of what kind of data you gather from these settlement services that help you with budgeting and determining programs etc.?

Ms. Cindy Lam: For the different programs within the larger settlement and integration umbrella, we've been asking for different things, which is one of the things that we're trying to redo based on the auditor's recommendations. The milestones are a really good set of indicators to have. But currently we look at program-level indicators.

For bridge training, the deputy already talked about this: how many people get a job, how many people get their licence. That's for the bridge training program.

For language training, we look at how many people go up to the next level of proficiency after so many hours of instruction, and that's to indicate whether or not they're making progress and whether the service provider is doing their job.

For newcomer settlement services, we look at the number of clients served. We also survey the clients themselves and ask them important questions like whether they can, because of the help that they received, make more informed decisions about their life, about jobs and about what services they might access.

That's what we have in place right now. At the end of the work based on the recommendations, we should have a more uniform set of indicators on which to evaluate and to assess the outcomes and whether or not the program is doing what it's supposed to do.

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Miss Kinga Surma: The AG mentioned earlier—and this is what worries me the most—that there is concern about the integrity of the data that is collected. Can you please address that?

Ms. Cindy Lam: So the data from our service providers—yes. Some are good. The language training system does actually have a system where people input data, and that's in fairly good shape. But with the settlement service providers—these are the smaller organizations that sometimes don't have the resources to do it well. We understand that and we realize that, so we are going to work on that. We're going to be asking people, clearly, what they should be collecting and how they should be collecting it, to ensure that the data is clean and good enough for us to use and to help inform our decisions. We do know that is an

issue, and that's why we're working hard on addressing that recommendation.

Being in the new MCCSS, now we have an opportunity, as an integrated ministry with an integrated data capacity. We want to be able to use that to our benefit and have a better process and also have better ask-outs to the service providers who will be providing us with that information.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Ghamari, you have about four minutes left in this cycle.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Because I only have four minutes, I'm going to try to keep my questions short, and I would ask that you keep your answers brief, as well. I apologize in advance if I interrupt you.

With respect to the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement: I've read through it and I've read through the appendices, and I still don't have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties. Is there a document or anything that clearly outlines what the province is responsible for versus what Canada is responsible for?

Ms. Cindy Lam: The Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement itself is a framework agreement, which is why I understand why you said what you said. You don't see a detailed listing of what the responsibilities are. It is an agreement that basically just outlines Canada and Ontario's agreement on joint priorities. It's a commitment to work on those priorities together.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: In the preamble, and also in your presentation, you mention that it's there to outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. I don't see that yet. When can we expect to get that information?

Ms. Cindy Lam: The next document would be the agreement—we were going to form a committee to oversee the implementation of that agreement. That hasn't happened yet. If you like, we could forward that agreement.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I've read the agreement, but thank you.

Going to my next question: You talked about a data-wide strategy that you would like to be implementing. Who is actually implementing that data-wide strategy?

Ms. Cindy Lam: The ministry is. We built some data capacity, analytics and research capacity, and we've been implementing that strategy—by that we mean, even just to get an understanding of what data we have, so to take inventory, and what kind of skills we have to deal with data. There are various aspects of that strategy—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Sorry to interrupt. So that's an internal process. You're not hiring an outside consultant or anything—

Ms. Cindy Lam: No.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: With respect to transfer payments, the recent inquiry commission spoke a lot about that. What I really wanted to know is, how are you going to manage accountability when it comes to service providers, when most of the payments are transfer payments? What strategies are you going to be implementing to keep them accountable for how they spend the money? For example, in the Auditor General's report, I noticed that there's a difference in range of costs for clients, from a high of \$106,000 to a low of \$3,600. What systems do you

have in place that can highlight that, if something like that pops up, and what can we do about it?

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thirty seconds.

Ms. Cindy Lam: We're working on improving what we had in place before, which is the transfer payment framework that we use for accountability. We are addressing the recommendations. For example, there was a recommendation to periodically verify the financial data that people give us, or the service data, or the performance data that people provide to us, which is what we're working on.

There is also a recommendation to see—"Can you look at this to see if it's reasonable?"—so reasonableness. We are implementing a process as part of the framework to address that as well.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you very much. Opposition side? MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Before I ask my first question, I just wanted to say thank you to the deputy minister for very gently repositioning some language. I just feel like I need to say that out loud. Instead of going with this notion of illegal border crossers, you were really clear about saying these are asylum seekers, and people entering in non-ports of entry. The reason I'm bringing that up right now is because it goes back to my last question around anti-racism training being integrated—or an eye to anti-racism being integrated—because the language that the ministry uses in a leadership position is going to determine how well somebody feels that they can settle in etc. So, just thank you for that. That makes my heart feel better.

What I am wondering is if that kind of leadership then can somehow get incorporated into the programming that you do approve next time, like when you're thinking of your evaluation matrixes and that kind of stuff, so that we're not inadvertently funding programs that actually do the opposite of making somebody feel like they belong in Ontario, or feel like they're welcome here. Just a question.

Ms. Janet Menard: You're speaking from an anti-racism, anti-discrimination lens, right?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yes, and part of why I am is because I know that the research shows so much data has been collected around employment outcomes for new immigrants when you don't have these kinds of strategies in place. I'm wondering if there's been any consideration about integrating that also as another one of the—not milestones, but something within the matrix when you're evaluating programs that you would be funding etc.

Ms. Janet Menard: I'll let Cindy answer as to whether or not it's a consideration that we've given in the past. But I can offer up the commitment that we can talk to our anti-racism and discrimination team here in the corporation. I don't know if it's a question that's been asked but I definitely think it's one that's worth asking. I'm sure that they would be happy to weigh in on it.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: That's fantastic. A little follow-up to that: Because what we're talking about is settlement—and again, I know that you're in the early stages of trying to figure out what a healthy settlement

looks like—and we do know that there is a huge problem when it comes to accessing various things.

Which brings me to another question around job placements and that kind of stuff. I think earlier in the presentation you had mentioned that a large portion of the new immigrants and refugees who come in have higher education, right? But when it comes to employment gaps across the skilled trades, or whatever it is that we need to do, they may be overqualified for such employment. I'm wondering, in the assessment of a good program, how is that taken into consideration. So, the skills that a new immigrant is already bringing here, are we validating that, and is there a way that we've been taking note of when we're placing people below what they should be doing? Does that make sense?

Ms. Janet Menard: The short answer is yes; assessment is part of our process.

1400

Cindy could speak to the job of the Fairness Commissioner. All of the associations that license organizations and regulate different sectors have to be very open and transparent in their expectations, so someone coming with credentials from another country could see even before they get here what the expectations are; that's in place.

We do assessments—it's part of the service that we provide—around people's credentials. Sometimes that takes a lot. As I said earlier, the challenges that they face are a combination of credentials not being recognized but, often, the lack of Canadian experience, which is hard to get over when you don't have it. This is where programs like bridge training are very effective.

I'll let Cindy comment further if she wants.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, absolutely. We also have a service where you inform people as much as possible, even before they get here. So if you are a professional or you are in what's regulated in Ontario—a profession or a trade—and you wish to find information before you even arrive, we have made that available. Certainly, when you do arrive, you can contact that service and they would direct you to the right bodies, to the right organizations, that would help you through with your licensure process. That comes under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, out of which came the Fairness Commissioner, whose job it is to make sure that practices are objective, impartial, transparent and fair.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: One other question before I hand it over to my colleague again: Has there been any discussion or consideration to getting child care, for instance, supported, so that newcomers can actually access some of these programs?

Ms. Janet Menard: Well, I would say newcomers have the same access to child care that anyone else does. Subsidized child care is available to them as well if their income is low, but they would be treated in the same way.

I'm not aware of targeted child care, but Cindy may know otherwise.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Perhaps it's related to the federal government in some other programs. In language training, for example, in some locations they do provide child care.

And that, going back to one of the previous questions, may be one of the reasons why some people are directed to their courses. If you are a parent and you have children that need to be looked after while you attend English classes—we have not looked at that in Ontario for our settlement and integration programs.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Okay and so, sorry, my last, I promise, is: When we are looking at duplication of services, then I just want to say for the record that it is so important for us to ask newcomers who are accessing these programs why it is that they might be accessing a federal program versus a provincial one, because if it turns out that it's because the federal is the one that offers a child care spot for them to be able to take a language class, I would hate for that to be seen as a duplication in error when, really, it might be the same program but they can't access the other one.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Okay. MPP Sattler.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Chair. I wanted to ask a question about recommendation 7 of the auditor's report and, in particular, her recommendation to "identify and share best practices in the delivery of settlement and integration services for newcomers."

I notice, in your status table of the responses to the auditor's report, that you identified that Canada-Ontario-Toronto MOU which will help facilitate the sharing of best practices. However, in your opening comments you talked about the interest of northern communities and rural communities.

Certainly, in my community of London there is huge interest in having more newcomers settle outside of Toronto. So I'd like to know what efforts are being made to identify and share best practices in communities outside of Toronto, because the settlement and integration process and services available will look much different in communities that are not in the GTA.

Ms. Cindy Lam: So, as part of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, there are four annexes to that agreement, one of which is a municipalities' annex recognizing that municipalities and communities have a big role to play in immigration. There is an MOU there, or an agreement there, with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Toronto has its own because it doesn't belong to that association.

So there is definitely recognition of the importance of regional immigration in northern communities, rural communities and mid-sized communities—communities other than the large urban centres. So we do have that link and we do have that relationship. We also build that through the local immigration partnerships in addition to the municipalities themselves. So, yes, that is going to be a key focus, regional immigration.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: So it is through the local immigration partnerships that you enable the sharing of the best—or is that the vehicle for both identifying and sharing best practices?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: And is there any provincial funding that goes to local—they're entirely federal?

Ms. Cindy Lam: No, not currently. I understand a few years ago we gave a little bit of funding, but not for quite a few years. It's a federally funded structure.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay.

Ms. Janet Menard: But we're at the table. We're at those local tables. We have a presence at those tables with the providers—settlement, language and integration service providers and whoever the other community partners are.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. And there's a formal MOU with Toronto. You talked about the role of AMO, which Toronto isn't a part of, but is there a formal MOU also with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario?

Ms. Cindy Lam: There is, yes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: There is also a formal MOU with AMO. Oh, and that's part of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement. I see. Thank you very much.

Ms. Janet Menard: If I can just add: We have done profiles on, I think, 12 communities across Ontario that are being used by the city of Toronto and that have also been given to the federal government that provide demographic service and community information to help newcomers coming into Canada or Ontario to decide where they'd like to go. So if there is a community that has a mosque or an ethnic presence—or, to go back to the skills question from MPP Surma, also to talk about the labour market opportunities and the gaps that exist and the types of skills that they're looking for so that newcomers can make informed decisions that also coincide with the needs of those communities. Many are very welcoming and want to attract newcomers, so we've been part of the process of identifying or creating profiles to help that process.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Any further questions from the opposition side?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: How many minutes do we have?

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): You have 11 minutes—I'm sorry, seven minutes. It's going backwards.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: We just lost some minutes.

I don't know if I asked this already but can you speak to us about the data that—in the interim, so while you are trying to create milestones etc., what data is being collected right now? Is there an interim measure of data collection that's going on so that it's not like we're sort of staying, not status quo, but staying where we are or where we were? Does that make sense?

Ms. Cindy Lam: No, we are continuing to collect what we have been collecting. Actually, I'm glad Yvonne is sitting here. She is the program director. You can actually go into a bit of detail about what we do collect.

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Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Sure. It varies by program. For example, for language training, we collect information on language assessments; that would be the proficiency level of a newcomer who was assessed. We collect information on their progression from one language proficiency level to another. We use the Canadian Language Benchmarks framework, so we measure how people move through that framework, and that's recorded and we have access to that information.

We also collect information not just for language training but for all programs, on the profile of who is being served. That would be information such as the demographic profile—gender, age breakdown, immigration category, source country, country of birth of clients, things like that. For bridge training, we collect information as well. We collect demographic information, but also information about—we follow participants to track those who completed a bridge training program; if they get employment, what kind of employment, earnings, the kind of employment they get. We follow up for up to two years after participants complete a bridge training program.

We also track whether those bridge training participants who complete a program that prepares them to obtain licensure or certification in a regulated profession actually pass their licensure or certification exam, and then whether they eventually get a job in their field.

For newcomer settlement, we track information about the types of services that newcomers receive, whether it's group orientation, whether it's individual counselling, information and referrals, things like that, as well as the profile of who is being served. We also track services that are specific to newcomer youth, which are distinct from those that adults receive. So we track that information. We do surveys as well in several different programs. For our Language Interpreter Services program, which is a program for victims of domestic or sexual violence with language barriers, we track the languages in which we provide the service. We track the nature of the services, whether clients are accessing services in health care, social services, shelters or other kinds of supports for that population. So it's quite a range of information.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Fabulous. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Good. Any other questions? Okay, thank you very much.

There's three minutes, so that means the government side will have 13 minutes in this cycle—13.

Mr. Norman Miller: This is the last—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): This is the last cycle, as you can tell.

MPP Ghamari.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. Continuing on with the questions that I had, in the past, let's say, five years, for example, how many service providers have been shut down because of poor performance indicators?

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: I don't have the exact number, but a very good estimated number. If we look at the past maybe seven years or so, in our Newcomer Settlement Program, we stopped funding probably about eight organizations that would have received ongoing funding for a number of years—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Were they replaced with, let's say, new settlement service providers?

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: They would have been, that's right. Typically, what happens when we stop funding a service or a particular organization is we look at other providers in that community to ensure that clients continue to have access to the services they need.

There will be a transition period, whenever we wind down a service, to ensure continued access—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. Sorry for interrupting. We have limited time and I just want to get to all the questions.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Sure.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: With respect to the Auditor General's recommendation 9, I read in her report that "ministry coordination with other Ontario ministries that provide services that can help newcomers to settle and integrate in Ontario has been limited" and that there are no formal arrangements in place "to obtain information from these ministries on the number of newcomers they serve or their outcomes." Apparently, "the overall cost of providing services that can help newcomers to settle and integrate ... has not been quantified by" any of the ministries.

Yet, I note that in the update that you provide, you indicate that the ministry is working collaboratively with several ministries. For example, let's look at labour. What's an example of how you are working collaboratively with the Ministry of Labour, in what sense?

Ms. Cindy Lam: With the Ministry of Labour, it is often related to newcomers' needs as they enter the labour market, their awareness of occupational health and safety and so on. So if they were developing materials and information, they would discuss or consult with us to see whether or not there would be some special considerations that we need to take into account to make sure that newcomers are served in that way. Sometimes it could mean different languages, multilingual resources. That's one of the key ways that we work with the Ministry of Labour.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you.

Ms. Janet Menard: If I can just add, at the time that the report was done, this ministry sat alone. This ministry is now together with children and youth, community and social services and women's issues, so some of the issues identified by the auditor, because programs were in separate ministries, have actually been addressed by the integration of the ministry.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Right. That's why I was specifically asking about labour, because it is a different ministry.

With respect to the auditor's recommendation number 5, in terms of settlement and integration goals, part of the response indicated that existing performance monitoring systems are currently being reviewed. Would it be possible to see what the existing performance monitoring systems are within the ministry and also, maybe, at some point, get a follow-up on when these were created, when they were reviewed and all that? Just so that we have an understanding of what we're working from.

My other question is, again, with recommendation number 3—so that the ministry has accurate and reliable information to monitor settlement services—you've indicated that there are currently systems in place for collecting financial and service information from service providers. My first question is, how often is that information collected?

Ms. Cindy Lam: When it comes to transfer payments, we use a transfer payment system called Grants Ontario,

so we can get information from there. Applicants or people who have proposals and projects actually upload information. There are some manual processes as well. That's collected. When we have a contract with a service provider, there are points at which they have to report in, based on the contract—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Right, so what I'm asking is, what those points are, typically.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Can you give me an example of what you're looking for? I just want to make sure that I can answer your question.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Okay, so the auditor—

Ms. Cindy Lam: How often do you—

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Oh, how often, the frequency. Absolutely. For some programs, it's quarterly. For some programs, it's biannually. For some programs, we actually get monthly data, so it depends on the program. For language training, for example, there is online live data being entered on a regular basis as people are assessed in our enrolling programs. So we actually have access to that data on a monthly basis.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: So biannually is the maximum, in terms of length.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Yes, the most.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Perfect.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: Twice a year would be the—

Ms. Cindy Lam: Twice a year, yes. Not once every two years.

Ms. Yvonne Ferrer: No, no; that's right.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I figured, yes, twice a year.

So then, with that in mind, with respect to, let's say, the difference in costs—costs per client—what would happen if, let's say, it gets back to you that this one service provider is spending \$106,000 per client?

Ms. Cindy Lam: You mean out of the blue?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Well, let's say you're doing your monthly reviews and then it comes up here. Wow, this particular service provider—the cost per client is \$106,000. What steps would the ministry then initiate in that case?

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Ms. Cindy Lam: When the reports come in, and if we notice anything that should be flagged, we actually make visits. We could follow up. We need to get an explanation before we would proceed and/or release the next payment or not, depending on the answer we get for that flagged item.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. And one final question: Is there a government standard or guideline that service providers currently have in terms of budgeting, for example, so that they can ensure the most responsible use of their funds?

Ms. Cindy Lam: They provide a budget when they put in a proposal based on what is in our request for proposals, and what is in our request for proposals is based on government practices.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: What government practices specifically?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Well, there's the transfer payment and accountability directive which will give us some of the

guidelines, our own monitoring and control systems. That would also inform the guidelines, but it needs to be sort of designed for the type of service, direct, indirect and so on. So we incorporate those into our calls for proposals.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you. And my last question, I promise—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): That was the last one.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Sorry. Last one, last one. With respect to analyzing inter-ministry duplication of services, who's taking the lead on that?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Inter-ministry—sorry?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: So, between ministries, a duplication of services—who's taking the lead on that? You mentioned that you're looking into services provided by different ministries and there's some duplication and overlap there. So is there anyone who's looking at that? What services are provided by other ministries so that there's no duplication when it comes to funding for different programs if it's already being provided by another ministry?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Oh, we were looking at duplication between the provincial government and the federal government, not across ministries, but we are looking at who is serving newcomers across all the ministries pertaining to recommendation number 9, where we are looking at—no one has the cost of serving newcomers, so we are working with other ministries to look (a) to see who has services that are accessed by newcomers and (b) what it would cost.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): MPP Rasheed, you have four minutes left.

Mr. Khaled Rasheed: Okay. This is a very concerning issue that I'm about to raise here, coming from some personal experiences as well. These refugees, especially the Syrian refugees, are actually very actively participating in this program. About a year ago, I was involved with a friend who wanted some Syrian refugees. He wanted to hire them for work. The response we got was, "It would be nice, but I cannot leave the newcomers' English-language program because if I leave, my government funding will stop."

Until today I'm hearing these—now, not everybody, but there are still a number of refugees who are still saying, "The moment I leave this program, whether it's provincial or federal, funding will stop. I might as well just stay in this program and capitalize as much as possible."

Am I going to blame those refugees? No, because this is what they have been informed of because, then, again these newcomer centres are never going to be like—they're always going to be packed with these individuals who should be now in the labour market, but they are not because of this federal or provincial funding that's given to them on a personal level.

Ms. Cindy Lam: So for the federal income support—if you are a government-assisted refugee, you do get income support for a year. I believe there are certain conditions on that income support. You can only work up to maybe so many hours before something happens to your income support. Especially for the Syrian refugees because they're government-assisted refugees, that is probably the case. If

they were already off federal support and on provincial support, then all the rules that apply to all social assistance recipients would apply to them.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Just to follow up: They want to continue with the newcomers program just because they don't want to leave the assistance, the funding that they're getting from the government, right? I mean, they're using the provincial newcomer program while getting funding from the federal government. So as the provincial taxpayer, we are paying for their classes while they are eligible now to move forward and go and get a job, but because of the federal funding they're receiving on a personal level, they want to stay within the program.

Ms. Cindy Lam: They could be accessing either federal or provincial services, right? They don't have to be accessing provincial services; they could be accessing federal services. Because they're on the one-year income support from the federal government, they just can't do a lot of work.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Yes, but these people came two years ago.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Then they wouldn't be on the federal support—

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Okay. Thank you very much. That concludes the government side. We'll move to the opposition side now. Yes, MPP Lindo.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Four quick questions: One is looking at recommendation number 9. It's just to try and understand what's happening now with the new structure. When you're saying that you collaborate with specific initiatives currently in place with several ministries—let's take education or training, colleges and universities; it doesn't matter which one—does this mean that the funding that you originally had prior to the restructuring, you would take some of that and budget and provide it to the Minister of Education to do these additional supports for newcomers that are in school, for instance? I'm not sure how the funding part happens under the new structure, essentially.

Ms. Cindy Lam: No, the collaboration is not about funding. With education, as well as training, colleges and universities, we've been working on an adult education strategy, which all three ministries have a piece of, so it's not about transferring funding.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Let's stick to education, like elementary, middle and high school. When we have newcomers who have specific needs, we already know that there's quite a lot of burden on the education system where they have lacked funding to be able to provide—ESL supports have been cut at times, that kind of stuff.

What I'm understanding is that the Ministry of Education—you would work in partnership, maybe, to develop a program or make a suggestion, but there would be no funding that we've been talking about, the budget that you folks have that would be used, or no way to support what's needed in the Ministry of Education?

Ms. Cindy Lam: This ministry's settlement and integration funding is for adults, so English as a second language and French as a second language courses are for

adults, which is why when we work with the Ministry of Education, we're basically part of the adult component of their work and not of primary or secondary schooling.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I didn't even know that. So the language training is only for the adults or—

Ms. Cindy Lam: It's non-credit, and it's for adult immigrants who want to pick up the official languages.

Ms. Janet Menard: But we do heavily rely on school boards to deliver those programs, so the school boards are our partners.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: But they aren't provided with additional funding to be able to do that work.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes, they are.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: They are? That's what I was wondering.

Ms. Janet Menard: Yes, but it's not through the Ministry of Education.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: So where? Can you—

Ms. Janet Menard: We invite proposals or estimates on their projected need and fund them accordingly. That's the—what is it?—\$53 million.

Ms. Cindy Lam: Yes. It's from this ministry.

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Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Okay. Another quick question, I think. When we're talking about allocations—I know there's been some discussion about the range, like how much money it would be to fund a new immigrant who's coming in and the range could be from—I'm making up numbers right now, but let's say \$400 to \$1,000 and something per person for a project or for a program.

I'm wondering if you could speak a little about how you folks balance the need to be fiscally responsible, making sure that programs are funded and not overfunded etc., with the varying needs of people who are coming in, because even through the time that we've been speaking, when we were listing all of the different kinds of programs, you might be dealing with somebody who's a survivor of domestic violence who requires more than somebody else.

I'm wondering how you balance out the general "This is what I think a newcomer needs in terms of financial and this is how much the province would be spending for them" with the particularities of the experiences that bring people here.

Ms. Janet Menard: I'm going to start by saying it's very difficult to quantify the value, for lack of a better term. As you heard, many of the immigrants—about half are economic who come in. They come highly educated, but they also contribute to the economy. There are 400,000 jobs created in Canada by immigrant businesses; 25% of Canadian patents come from immigrant co-inventors; and 28% of small business owners in Ontario had a majority of owners or CEOs born outside of Canada.

So the comparison against the cost of the investment that our ministry makes complementary to the federal investment is difficult to make, but it's the kind of cross-ministry discussion that will get us closer, to Cindy's point, to a sense of the whole investment across government.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Okay. Another quick one is, in terms of folks who might be coming to seek asylum and they're coming from an experience of trauma, does any of the funding go to mental health support and that kind of stuff in helping them to settle here?

Ms. Cindy Lam: Various service providers would—some of them would have the capability to do that. Probably less directly and more “Who can I connect you with? Here's how you can access the services,” realizing that's a very important component.

We have currently a special component of a settlement program that's directed towards refugees and people who are more vulnerable, and this began when the Syrians started coming in, knowing that this is a population that would probably require some additional help.

So yes, mental health is recognized in the settlement services sector as a very important component of well-being and integration, both social and labour market.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: And so if we have a new immigrant or an asylum seeker who's here and happened to be on social assistance, does social assistance cover mental health support or is that something they have to figure out—a way to find the funding to access that support?

Ms. Janet Menard: That would not be provided through the social assistance system. They may get connection through a settlement and integration organization, but it wouldn't be connected to social assistance.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Catherine Fife): Any further questions?

Seeing none, that concludes our designated question time. Thank you very much to the Ministry of—what are you now? You're the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Thanks for your answers. This meeting will be moving in camera for report-writing, and it is officially adjourned.

The committee continued in closed session at 1435.

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Mr. Christopher Tyrell

Staff / Personnel

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Research Services