

**MEETING STATUS: PUBLIC**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**SESSION 2/62**

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

**Motion No: 5**

**Year: 2005**

**VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF  
HOUSE COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

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**COMMITTEE: STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

**Thursday, September 22, 2005**

**SUBJECT(S) BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:**

Further Consideration of Motion No. 5 - Attracting New Immigrants to Prince Edward Island.

**NOTE:**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**PRESENT:**

Wilfred Arsenault, Chair  
Helen MacDonald  
Jim Bagnall replacing Hon. Jamie Ballem  
Honourable Philip Brown  
Eva Rodgerson  
Richard Brown  
Cletus Dunn replacing Fred McCardle

**ABSENT:**

Carolyn Bertram

**GUESTS:**

Part I - Blake Doyle  
Part II - Acadian Communities Advisory Council: Jeannita  
Bernard & Dominique Chouinard  
Part III - Patricia Diaz  
Part IV - PEI Federation of Labour: Leo Cheverie

**STAFF:**

Marian Johnston, Committee Clerk  
Thilak Tennekone



**Committee on Community Affairs & Economic Development**  
**Thursday, September 22, 2005**  
**10:00 a.m.**

**Part I - Blake Doyle**

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Good morning everyone. We're here to bring further consideration of Motion No. 5 which is "Attracting Immigrants to Prince Edward Island". This morning we have four presenters that are scheduled to be here and the first presenter is at the table and ready to roll. Mr. Blake Doyle is here. He has been here before. I believe that Mr. Doyle was here presenting and we have asked him to come back. He came back at our request to carry on with the presentation because he got into a very interesting topic and most people around the table felt that we needed to bring this gentleman back so we could continue the conversation. We will allow Mr. Doyle to perhaps give us a presentation, to continue with his presentation for a period of 15, 20 minutes which will be followed by approximately 10 minutes of questions from committee members and without further delay, Mr. Doyle you have the floor.

**Blake Doyle:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for inviting me back committee members and Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief in my remarks. I think what I'd like to do when I was here before to present research I'd done as part of a Masters program I was involved Halifax, what I'll do is I'll read a paragraph or two from the abstract, which is an introduction to the research I've done. I've got probably a dozen slides which I'll go through fairly quickly. I won't bore you with figures and details. I know you've seen that stuff before and then I'd be happy to answer the questions.

So the quick introduction here, this is related to my research. The rate of population growth in Atlantic Canada is slowing and in Newfoundland the population rate has been in decline for a number of years. Prince Edward Island is not immune to these trends. Out-migration remains a problem while birth rates are decreasing. Population growth is stagnating and predicted to decline in the coming decades. As the national population

continues to grow Prince Edward Island and many smaller provinces are faced with an inevitable threat of diminishing geopolitical influence, loss of autonomy and increasing demands on governmental funding. One strategy that will effectively combat the dynamics of population erosion in smaller provinces is to actively recruit targeted immigrants. The relative population erosion is obliged to continue without the aid of progressive policies. Strategies must be instituted to mitigate this trend and policy makers must be proactive in attracting foreign born immigrants to their respective geography. While a balanced approach to immigration is required economic immigrants bring skill, capital and experience. This class of immigrant, not only increases the population, they're also an economic development catalyst. An understanding of immigration patterns, identification of migrant communities and empathy to immigrants motivations are all required to propose effective strategies.

I'll just give an introduction why I'm here and why this topic is of particular relevance. I did just complete my Masters Program at Saint Mary's, graduated in May. This is a very topical issue. When I started this research in the fall of 2004 the importance of this has exploded and certainly has become a larger issue on the national scene and is critically important to Atlantic Canada, particularly PEI. I did have the occasion to travel to Shanghai and Vietnam in March and this tied in very well with my research as I had met with a number of perspective immigrants as well as immigration agents and other people related to this field of study. This issue is important public policy I think for the government of Prince Edward Island. As I have made this my location to live it's important, I think, that I understand it and hopefully I can help to influence policy because it's very relevant to PEI.

Now I have done this presentation in Halifax. I've delivered it to several municipalities and the

reason being I think there's an opportunity for a municipality to take a leadership role and identify themselves as someone who's a welcoming community that will try to recruit and attract people. I was recently involved with a resolution that will be delivered to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce this week and I think on Sunday we'll deliver that and that's around immigration, the impact of immigration on the national stage. I believe this is a critical issue for PEI, its competitiveness and stability, in the years as we go forward.

So what I'll do is I'll talk a little bit about the research that I've done, at a high level I'll touch on these. I won't waste too much time and I can provide facts and figures to support this stuff if you need. So evaluation of the issues - the relevant population of PEI is eroding relative to Canada and this has drastic impacts for a province that's dependent on federal transfer payments which a function of that is the relative population-that's how it's calculated. Provincial government has limited flexibility to provide economic stimulus and I think that's eroding as we see and a targeted group of immigrants needs to be recruited. So the demographic shift-I think you're aware of this-basically within the next decade we're going to have 25 per cent less students graduating from our high school system and we can see the impact of that both in the labour force as well as any other related services that are offered by government or by the local community.

We can see here, and I'll just touch on this briefly, you can see the Atlantic Canadian provinces-this is census data from '91-96 in blue and in green '96 to 2001- and the population is eroding in all of our sister provinces. PEI's a bit of an anomaly, our population, you know, it is declining but it hasn't declined to the magnitude of the other provinces. This may be just a blip in the radar but I think you can see consistently across the board, Atlantic Canada, Canadian population is diminishing.

So the issues that I focussed on in my study were attraction, retention and integration of immigrants. On the attraction side, who should we be attracting, how do we attract them and how would you profile the ideal candidate-basic marketing issues. Retention-how do we keep the immigrants in the province-which is a problem for any place outside of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. And are there policy initiatives that could be taken to develop clusters or ethnic enclaves, which is one of

the factors that increases people's intention to stay. On the integration piece, how do you integrate immigrants into the community and provide incentives for them to remain on Prince Edward Island?

The literature review, I've studied a number of things and these ones I've focussed on mostly. They're probably not terribly relevant but I'll quote them just because it will put some context into what I'll be discussing. Barry Edmonston and Sharon Lee have studied persistence in change in immigrant resettlement. They've also done another study on who comes, who stays and who leaves. Tina Chu from Statistics Canada did a longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada. Richard Florida talks a lot about creative class and how you create clusters in communities that attract a certain demographic of individuals and I think that ties in very well. And Ron Heisler from Nova Scotia did a "Framework for Immigration" which is terribly relevant, I think, to PEI's situation. And finally Mr. Li did one on "Immigrant's Propensity to Self-Employment".

The Longitudinal Survey-these are just a couple of select stats-68 per cent were born in Asia, in the Middle East. Peoples Republic of China contributed 32,000 to Canada followed by India and Pakistan. So you can see the concentration of immigrants according to this 2001 study is definitely weighted towards China. One of the issues with the Chinese population is the requirement to speak English as a second language and how that might impact the immigration strategy here in PEI.

Of the 164,000 registered immigrants, the economic class made up the largest proportion, 67 per cent of all immigrants who came to Canada during that study period. The highest proportion were, of employed immigrants were economic class. That's why I focus my study on this economic class. We do need to have a balanced approach to immigration. I was most interested in looking at the economic class and how we would integrate those individuals into the community. Key attraction factors were family, friends and economic opportunities, education and lifestyle.

The next study is who comes, who stays and why they leave. In PEI and several other provinces the out-migration of foreign born residents was above 20 per thousand persons. Now that's not terrible

significant but when you look at during the study there's about 166 thousand people who migrated to Canada. It was the largest-between 1991 and 2000- the largest single migration period in our history was during that period. Now, the majority of those people migrated to Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Four per cent migrated to other regions. So if you look at this statistic of how many people are staying you've only got 4 per cent of the eligible sample space staying in rural regions. That's not just PEI but any place outside of those three metropolis centres. Then it's very critical you try to retain these people.

In Nova Scotia's case less than, only 40 per cent of the immigrants they recruited would stay in the province. These are stats you probably heard before but I'd be happy to elaborate on them if needed. So people are influenced to gravitate to where the economic prospects are the greatest. This provides a challenge to PEI with a high unemployment rate and the perception of lack of opportunities in this area. We have experienced an annual immigration arrival rate of about .1 per cent which is not terribly strong.

Ron Heisler's work on the "Framework of Immigration" demonstrates the population of Nova Scotia was slowing over the recent decades and it's projected to attain a zero growth rate by 2023. That's significant and it's also interesting that Nova Scotia has identified this and they've taken strategic actions to correct this. One of the most recent, in January of 2005 they've appointed a minister responsible for immigration in the province of Nova Scotia. Between '91 and 2001 Nova Scotia was only able to retain 40 per cent of the immigrants which is the second lowest retention rate among all provinces. So they've got a serious issue. They've also got an attractive region in which to have immigrants gravitate.

Another feature I looked at was a cost benefit analysis program in Manitoba who arguably have the most successful program outside of Quebec and this is on the Provincial Nominee Program. And what I looked at was the ratio of full time equivalent employees who are working on the Nova Scotia Program comparative to the Manitoba Program. If you look at the cost I believe it was \$6 million Manitoba spent on immigration recruitment compared to Nova Scotia, which is about 550,000.

If you look at the cost per retained immigrant it was about \$3000 for Manitoba and about \$300 for

Nova Scotia. Now, Nova Scotia don't have a really large contingent of full time equivalence. It's certainly larger than what PEI had dedicated to the issue at this point. So cost benefit, despite the growth in Manitoba, it's still more effective in Nova Scotia.

Self-employment-this is kind of interesting because it talks about immigrants and who are most apt to be self employed when they reach a geography. Again it steers back to economic immigrants. The longer the immigrants stay in Canada, the extent and intensity of self employment increases. And I think it was within six months, four of 10 economic immigrants had been fully employed. According to this study, entrepreneurial immigrants from Western Europe are the most desirable candidates and I believe it was suggested men are also more desirable from that geography. Now, according to the 2003 study that Tina Chu did it suggested women are actually more apt to migrate to Canada. So the strategies that the province may employ should sort of look at those factors-both demography as well as geography.

The higher the education level the greater the potential for self-employment, probably no great surprise. Economic class immigrants tend to be more likely to engage in self-employment activities and the older the immigrant the greater the likelihood of self employment. That just relates to general life experience.

Now Richard Florida's work on the creative class, he suggests a number of things and essentially what factors have to be available to attract and retain people, not just immigrants but to create a thriving community. So a thriving creative class can be directly linked to thriving economies. Therefore an understanding of what conditions are required to establish a thriving creative class correlates to society's desire to prosper. And he suggests that traditional economic development activities, such as investment in infrastructure, is not an appropriate way to attract individuals but rather influence the creative class by recruiting that sector of people to the province. And I have some more details on that, if required. He also suggests the three Ts are necessary-technology, talent and tolerance.

So the analysis, and I think I'm right on track, there are a couple more slides-PEI's population is

slowing 5 percent between '96 and 2001, which is the most recent census data available. We need external stimulant capital. This is an interesting thing. The Mosaic Index-and this is something that Richard Florida talks about-and if you look at Canada 18.4 per cent of the population recognizes foreign born immigrants and in Australia it's 22 per cent and US is slightly behind Canada at 16 or 17 per cent. Now, the issue being if you look at-and Florida talked about this in October 2004 *Harvard's Business Review*-if you look at homogenous nation states such as Japan and Germany their economic activity is on a decline and it could be argued that's because of the homogenous nature and lack of external influence.

Atlantic Canada is also very homogenous and we don't have a terrible strong mosaic outside of this region. If you look at the Mosaic Index, which really evaluates the percentage of foreign born individuals to the native population, Nova Scotia is 5 per cent and Halifax is 7 per cent and PEI in general is .11 per cent. Charlottetown is a little bit higher at .33 per cent but there's an awful lot of work that needs to be done to increase the mosaic of PEI's landscape. We need to attract economic immigrants who can bring skill and capital but more importantly, you know, if you look at somebody like Porter's analysis of cluster development we need someone who'll be a catalyst that can draw in others and if you have economic development to bring capital and experience they can be that catalyst that then draw family and friends from other geographies and provide that framework on which to build a successful immigration strategy.

This is just a quick analysis and what I did is I took the population secretariat's projections-the three year projection for immigrants that they intend to bring which I think was about 700 by year three. I broke that down into the five immigration classes that the province identified and the nominal GDP growth per person in Canada, in Prince Edward Island it's about \$28,000. So what I did is I looked at, okay, each of these immigrant classes - let's take that nominal GDP number, let's weight that against each of the different immigrants classes and, you know, I said that skilled workers probably contributes less to the economy initially than an immigrant entrepreneur who brings capital in. Then what I did is I took a multiplier effect which is based on Business Development's multiplier effect that they look at when they evaluate

businesses they try to recruit to the province. I compared this with other geographies and they range from probably one per cent to 11 per cent sort of across North America. So I took 2.5 per cent and I think PEI's is about 2.3 per cent. So what I did is I multiplied the contribution to GDP across each of these five immigrant classes and multiplied it by the multiplier effect and looked at what the gross contribution to provincial GDP would be within (indistinct) classes. If you follow the calculation across to the bottom column on the right hand side it's a \$51 million contribution by year three, assuming that each of these immigrant classes contribute, you know, based on my sort of rough estimate to GDP.

Now the provincial GDP is, it's a small fraction, it's about .1 percent of GDP but it does represent a substantial increase and if you look at immigration capital flows most people who would immigrate to this region, the ones who stay tend to have their investment multiply within the economy. They don't travel. They buy groceries, rent and cars in their community and at least initially they tend not to travel too far beyond the border of PEI.

So in conclusion, PEI is in jeopardy and has a risk of losing autonomy, geopolitical influence, transfer payments, social diversity, external influence, economic stimulus and creative vitality if immediate and decisive action is not taken to slow this population erosion.

There's a couple of things that I recommended in my report and I'll summarize these very briefly. I would propose that PEI needs a targeted attraction-immigration attraction policy- and what we should potentially do is look at a specific geography. PEI is too small to focus broadly across, you know, the globe. Let's look at a specific geography any maybe that's Western Europe. I selected Shanghai because I spent some time there and I see it as a very vibrant community with a lot of affluence. The demography, if we look at some of the studies that I've referenced, the ideal age profile is between 25 and 44. They have the most potential to integrate and they bring the most opportunity with them when they move.

As far as the classes again, I focussed on economic immigrants just because of the capital, the experience that they bring to the community but I also referenced the Bobos which is

something that Richard Florida references and it stands for the bohemians, it's a combination, a synthesis between bohemians and bourgeois and the bourgeois are sort of the fast paced, people who are interested in capital, you know, making money. The bohemians are more the artisans, the musicians, the people who are the thinkers, I guess, in society. But it's a specific class that creates economic vitality.

Communication strategy would suggest that there should be a more concerted education program that could certainly start within the high school system, both in the public domain as well as within government sectors. The extension-now I suggested this the last time I was here and it's basically to leverage tourism budgets, if you were to increase the tourism budget by a million dollars. If you look at Nova Scotia's tourism strategy I think it's come to life. It's sort of the tag line. If you had something similar to that for PEI which maybe - live on PEI - you could leverage that not only for attraction of visitors such as tourists but also potential migrants as well.

So the public policy is really directed by three levels-federal, provincial and more accountability within the systems and potential P and P reforms. So federally there is a move afoot I think right now to evaluate the P and P program which relates directly to the economic immigrants. How we increase the percentage of immigrants who are now allocated to this province. If you look at the 74 per cent of immigrants who go to Toronto or Vancouver or Montreal and according to the Tina Chu study, only 4 per cent migrate beyond those three geographies. How do we increase that percentage to PEI? And of that 4 per cent there's no studies that indicate how many people actually stay. It's quite well studied and proven that people who migrate necessarily don't stay to the province or the geography that they migrate to. So federally I think we need more control on having people stay to the province in which they migrate.

Provincially let's evaluate the non-English speaking requirement and evaluate the investment and how it's allocated and where, what sectors it's invested in and accountability within the program examining current practices.

I think that's it. I've got lots of other stats and figures that I can tell, share with you. It's almost twenty after so I've stayed on target and I'll leave

it at that. If there's anything else I can add I'd be happy to.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Thank you very much, Blake. Very informative. The charts on the screen were a bit difficult to see from this seat anyway, especially with the grey background and white lettering. But I do believe that you'll be leaving some stuff with us for further evaluation.

**Blake Doyle:** I can send you some information, sure.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Okay, anything you can leave with us we'd appreciate. Okay folks, if you have any questions fire away. Now's the time. Eva, go ahead.

**Eva Rodgeron (PC):** First when you talked about Prince Edward Island more or less kind of holding its own rather than the bigger decline that they have in the other Atlantic provinces. Can you attribute any information as to why that is? Is it because maybe now we might have a few more jobs here? Is there any way of tracking that?

**Blake Doyle:** I didn't analyse that. It's certainly not because there's more jobs. Last year the unemployment rate was 15 per cent. This year it was 13.1 per cent. That's a serious disadvantage and would not appeal to economic immigrants who are looking to come. Actually I have a little chart here I could leave. I know that's kind of hard to see. This is a little difficult to see but I'll kind of read it out for you. The main reasons people migrate to communities are - there's five - family and friends, job prospects, lifestyle, education prospects and language. And if you look at the right hand column of that chart educational prospects here on PEI are actually, it's probably an attribute that you could market. You've got fairly strong education facilities for such a small geography. And I think in the 2004 MacLean's rating of universities I think UPEI was number eight which is pretty good. You know we've got a strong college system and I think that could be, they could mitigate that factor.

The lifestyle, as I talked a little bit about what Richard Florida describes as the environment that you would use to attract creative class of people. You know people aren't necessarily looking for freeways and sports stadiums but they're looking for quality of life, vibrancy within small cafes and

things like that. I think PEI can address that issue as well. The job prospects is a problem and, you know, that's an issue for successive governments and I can't comment on that or strategies that would change that.

Now, the family and friends is by far-I think it's 46 per cent of people migrate for that reason. And each of those colored bar graphs in the family and friends - the first one, light purple, is Toronto; the dark purple is Vancouver and the yellow one is Montreal. There's a lot of gravitational pull for people to go there and if PEI doesn't have a strategy that provides for an ethnic enclave or some sort of critical mass that then you can attract other family and friends you're probably always going to be at the disadvantage of these larger metropolis centres.

So as far as why the, why the population is increasing in PEI, I think that's a complete anomaly. It's increasing at a decreasing rate. So you know that your provincial counterparts are at a more disadvantage but I would suggest that at 139,000 people, you know, we need to increase that to increase competitiveness. If we don't the population in Canada is growing and our geopolitical influence declines as our population doesn't reach that. Now our population growth nationally is 4 per cent and I think ours is about 1.5 or 8 per cent.

**Eva Rodgeron (PC):** I remember on the education side of it, one problem was that if I were a university student here from another country the ability to stay here and work for any length of time-I remember that was a fact that needed to be addressed in order to maybe even retain some of the ones that may have liked the lifestyle here but needed an opportunity to work.

**Blake Doyle:** It's an interesting point and I'll just comment on it very briefly. Nova Scotia is addressing that right now and I believe New Brunswick is as well. I think UPEI has been very active in recruiting people from outside the province. Saint Mary's has been extremely successful at that in the recent decade. Now one of the issues with the current immigration policy is that students aren't allowed to work outside of the campus and if there was a relaxation on that, if you get students to integrate into the community while they're here you've got them, you've got their attention. How can you get them to be more

involved in the community? Allow them to work outside of the university setting and then there's a greater likelihood that they would stay. Now I have spoke with some immigrants from Vietnam who were challenged by that issue. They wanted to stay but at the termination of their student visa they had to return to the province.

**Eva Rodgeron (PC):** And you say Nova Scotia is working on that at the present time.

**Blake Doyle:** I think Nova Scotia has actually adopted a policy. They were looking at it in the spring and I think they've adopted that now.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** I guess I'm looking at the percentages. We've got 96 per cent of the immigrant are going to three big centres and it's perhaps because of their culture and whatnot that's there. I'm thinking of our newest immigrant to Summerside and that's the Chinese gentleman that runs the spa.

**Blake Doyle:** Yes, Mr. Loo.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** And you know there doesn't seem to be any barriers for that gentleman. He can't speak our language but he has his own interpreter. He's a businessman and to me all he's looking for is for us to welcome him. I have friends in Summerside who are also Chinese, Dr. Wong and Sophie and that was all they were looking for.

I sometimes think that that 4 per cent, when you look at the rest of Canada looking for 4 per cent of the immigrants, are we chasing something that they really don't want to be here. And are we really focussing in on the people who really do want to come? And I think of these two people in particular. There doesn't seem to be any barriers that I can see. They just want to be welcomed in the community. They like the community. And I think they'll find their own way if we can just welcome them. But I don't know. It just seems like such a low, low number there.

**Blake Doyle:** Yes, it is, it's surprisingly low. And I guess the issue is of that 4 per cent what percentage is PEI getting and how do you retain them if you do get them now. I actually work in Summerside and so I'm familiar with Mr. Loo's sort of situation and that's why I focussed on this class of immigrant. And if you look he's extremely

wealthy. He's identified an opportunity on PEI. He's going to stimulate the local economy. But if you look at him as a gravitational force, you know, he's got enough financial resources that he can potentially attract other people to service, you know, protect that investment that he's made. So him as a catalyst at the centre of the equation, there's other people that are sort of orbiting around that he can pull in. So I think that supports some of the argument that I'm making.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** Right. And I think our job is to really make sure that he is welcomed into the community and I think the rest of it will just fall into place. I'm sure he'll teach us a lot. He's just a wonderful gentleman.

**Blake Doyle:** Now I've met-just on that note-I have met with Stratford and Charlottetown. I meet with Summerside this fall, with the council, and the intent there is to, again I'm promoting - I think there's an opportunity for a leadership position to be taken by a community and perhaps it's Summerside- to make an investment to be a welcoming centre and provide the services to help people integrate.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** Absolutely.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** First of all I want to say your presentation was very informative. Your research is well done. The challenge I guess we all have as we explore this particular subject area is twofold. You identified Western Europe and certain demographic profiles that are more beneficial to the economy but also that may be immigrants. Certainly Western Europe is facing the same challenges that we are in terms of population growth and most of their strategies are the same. But when I look at this particular subject the whole western world is, we're having this problem of population challenges and so therefore we're after a certain crowd but they're also after us and therein comes the other part of my problem with this is that PEI is being looked upon by other economies as part of the solution to their human resource problem.

I mean I know of a firm this week that lost six operators going West to work in the oil patch. This is not just isolated. We're not the only ones in this game. There are many people that are - people are moving. We belong to a very mobile society today and, you know, I look at my two oldest

children. Both studied outside the province and what's the chances of them staying inside the province when they work. And it's not that that's a good thing or a bad thing because they're going to want to see what the world has to offer also. So how do we participate in this challenge without- like, if every Islander that was born here still lived here this place would be pretty full. But the reality is that many people have left. My father's family, 11 children and there was only one of them that spent their life on PEI working and then my own family is a little bit different and we're actually 8 out of 10 that are actually here in the province. But that's unusual. Most of us could look around at friends and relatives that have left the province and so while we're attracting people we're also losing people. And the overall analysis points to a lowering of birth rate. So therefore don't you have to look to countries that aren't experiencing the same difficulty, that have what some of you, and I don't know how you quantify that, but some would say an excessive population.

**Blake Doyle:** On PEI?

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** No. Potential immigrants should come from an area where there is an excessive population. And I don't know how you quantify, as I say, an excessive population. But there are those who believe that certain countries have a excessive population and wouldn't they be the greater potential for immigrants. I know the challenge is we have trouble with them staying.

**Blake Doyle:** A lot of points there. So I'll just address them quickly. I may forget some. You can remind me if I have. Everything you said is accurate and supported by what I've looked at. As a follow up of this work I've actually done some evaluation of the national P & P programs which is what sort of drives a lot of this economic immigrant sort of portfolio.

You know, according to one of the studies which I referenced which was Simon Loo I think, he suggests that Western Europe is a good place to focus attraction. The attraction of economic immigrants is very competitive. It's extremely competitive nationally and it's, you know, even more competitive outside the domain of Canada. So you've got Canada competing with probably Australia who are the most aggressive. Then you've also got provincially a lot of competition and

different factors why people migrate to different areas.

If you look at, you know, some place like China which is what I suggested, it's 1.3 billion population, people there are craving western ideology. They are hungry, they're aggressive. You know, the people that I have-and I keep very frequent interaction with a number of people I met there-they're hungry. They are ambitious and to focus on a geography like that, to bring that kind of creative class of immigrant in can only help to spur economic activity. So it's competitive to get the homogenous people like Western Europe that fit and immigrate very well. It's a little bit more difficult to integrate the people from outside this geography but the potential payoffs like a Mr. Loo may be great.

So I don't know if that addressed all your points but what you've suggested is certainly supported by the research that I've done.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** The final question will go to Richard.

**Richard Brown (L):** Thank you, Chairman. Great presentation. My district has a large immigration population and a lot of them come from Eastern Europe, like Yugoslavia and Bosnia and places like that. They're great people and they bring a lot of skills to PEI, what I've seen in my district anyway-a great diversity and it's a great district to have because there is a lot of diversity there and they're fitting in quite well I find anyway.

Are our immigration targets, when we go and look for immigrants nationally or provincially I guess, are we targeting the big cities and the people who live in the big cities are coming to this small Island and saying- I want to move to the big city. I've been born in a big city. I live in a big city. I want to stay in a big city. Should we not target like the smaller towns and the smaller places in some of these countries to say we will target some towns with 30, 40, 50,000 people instead of going to some place with three or four million? Because, you know, for me to go to Toronto I'd have a rough time fitting in and for a person from Toronto coming here would have a rough time fitting in. Just it's two different types of environments and are we going after the big cities because the consulates are there, the embassies are there and we're targeting people that . . . you know, I can't

live in the country and a lot of these guys can't live in the city probably and that's the thing. I can't even spend a weekend at a cottage. That's just the way I am. I need the noise of the cars and that stuff and these guys may need . . .

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** Good for your blood pressure to move out to the country.

**Richard Brown (L):** Are we targeting the wrong people? And then they're coming to Canada and saying, look, I can't live in a small town. I'm heading to Toronto.

**Blake Doyle:** I don't know what the specific policy is for the government in what areas they're attracting. I know Nova Scotia has just increased their- I think they do about a thousand, they have a thousand over five years. I forget the numbers but they've just requested additional spots to recruit more immigrants because their program is so successful. If you look at China there's a hundred cities with over a million population. Toronto, you know with their population is a very small city. I mean Shanghai is seven million people. So you really have to start to look at the very economic disadvantage when you start to go outside of these big centres and I think they would integrate much better. There's a lot of affluence being built. Most of it tends to be in the bigger centres and I suspect that's probably where the majority of the focus is attracting economic immigrants. But even if you look at, you know, Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal they're not large cities by global standards. You know Toronto is a good sized city but there's a lot of bigger cities. So, yes, that's an issue and it probably goes back to what the province should be focussing their policy on and what type of immigrant they attract.

**Richard Brown (L):** What do you think our target should be?

**Blake Doyle:** As far as what locations?

**Richard Brown (L):** No, immigration. How many should we . . . your analysis and things like that? Over five years what do you think we should be able to accomplish?

**Blake Doyle:** Well, I think the province has projected 700 in three years. That's broken across-there's five different immigration categories. I guess I'd have to think about that a

little bit more. I would suggest that the problem is infrastructure and integration. You know, you've got, Kevin Arsenault has the Newcomers Association. My understanding is they're quite taxed. And if you look at that as a primary resource for helping people to adjust to PEI, maybe if you don't have that properly funded or staffed, you know, maybe we're at capacity.

So one of the things that I've looked at, sort of beyond this, from personal interest is, you know, what type of infrastructure support needs to be provided on PEI? Can that be provided privately and how do you help people integrate, establish a foothold here and retain them. I mean once you get people retained then they attract their family and friends as we've just sort of demonstrated. It's a big issue and I'm sure there's people within the province who are putting a lot of focus on this at this time. I would like to support that if I could but I think if we don't be very proactive and address that very quickly we will be at a serious competitive disadvantage.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Blake, thank you very much. Your presentation was of top quality and you bring a lot of information to our committee. I'm sure that we could keep you going for the rest of the morning with questions but we do have other presenters. I appreciate the interest that you have brought forward to the issue at hand. I'm sure you will be following our committee to see what becomes of the decisions of government in this area. And I do realize this is your field of expertise and I wish you luck in your future endeavours. Again, thank you very much on behalf of the committee.

**Blake Doyle:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

## **Part II - Acadian Communities Advisory Council: Jeannita Bernard & Dominique Chouinard**

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** *La prochaine personne qui je demanderais à s'avancer est Madame Jeannita Bernard. Jeannita c'est la présidente du Comité consultatif des communautés acadiennes, et puis est-ce qu'elle est accompagnée de Madame Dominique, non, oui? D'accord.*

The next person I would like to ask to come forward is Mrs. Jeannita Bernard. Jeannita is the chairperson of the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee and is she accompanied by Mrs. Dominique, no, yes? Alright.

Ladies and gentlemen Jeannita Bernard is representing the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee and she has a presentation for us. Did you want the overhead projector?

**Jeannita Bernard:** No, I'm a technological nerd.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Regardless you're still, you're welcome to the committee. You'll fit very well with us. And without further ado perhaps you can give us perhaps a brief background on the committee that you represent and then you can proceed with your presentation. As stated earlier you have 15 to 20 minutes for your presentation and I hope that you'll entertain a few questions afterwards.

**Jeannita Bernard:** *Merci beaucoup Monsieur le Président et les autres membres du comité, et de la part du Comité avoisière acadienne et francophone, sur les affaires acadiennes et francophones, je vous remercie de cette opportunité.*

Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson and the other members of the committee, and on behalf of the Acadian and Francophone Advisory Committee on Acadian and Francophone Affairs, I thank you for this opportunity.

**Jeannita Bernard:** Thank you very much for this opportunity. For easier communication I will proceed in English if that is acceptable. Thanking you for this opportunity I know I have limited time but for the benefit of the members I will give you a brief description of the Committee Acadian. The PEI government created the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee in 1977. The Committee has nine voting members. Seven of these representatives represent specific geographic regions across the province. There's West Prince, East Prince, Evangeline has two members, Queens has two members and Kings. There's also a chair and a youth representative who are not affiliated with a particular region. The members of the Advisory Committee are appointed by the Minister Responsible for Acadian and Francophone Affairs and the Minister

Responsible for Francophone Affairs, the Honourable Elmer MacFadyen and Mr. Wilfred Arsenault who represents the minister and an administrative secretary are all ex-officio members.

Our Committee's mandate is to advise the provincial government on how proposed legislation, policies, programs and services meet the needs of PEI's Acadian and Francophone community. The advice is given at the ministerial level and through various mechanisms put in place by government such as public consultations just very much like this one and open invitations to submit comments and our committee also provides a focal point for input for the Island Acadian and Francophone community regarding government activities that affect the community.

I'd also like to give you a bit of a picture of the Acadian and Francophone community here on PEI. According to the 2001 census the population of PEI whose mother tongue was French reached 5,890 individuals or 4.4 per cent of the total population, just a little bit of an increase since the 1996 census. And also PEI has the third highest rate of bilingualism in the country after Quebec and New Brunswick. And according to the 2001 census again approximately 12 per cent of the Island's total population is bilingual. And although it's spread throughout the province the Acadian and Francophone community is located in six main regions and I'm sure some of you are very familiar with that concentration. There's West Prince, Evangeline, Summerside, Miscouche, Rustico, the Greater Charlottetown area and Eastern Kings and the Souris area.

There are 14 provincial organizations, 100 local organizations, 282 businesses and over 60 million in cooperative assets. French post-secondary distance education is offered by société éducative and tourism is a particular strength of the Acadian and Francophone community and some of you are, I'm sure, very familiar with Rendezvous Rustico and Le Festival Acadian, L'exposition Agricole de La Région Évangéline. This is just a mini snap shop of the community but just to demonstrate that the Acadian and Francophone community is very active, organized and very present in all sectors of Island society.

Now, given that the topic of attracting immigrants to PEI is of interest to our community for a number

of reasons, despite the facts and figures that I just told you about, the Acadian and Francophone community it is in a precarious situation and that our population represents just under 5 per cent of the total population, should the government of PEI engage in a immigration strategy aiming to recruit newcomers from countries where French is not one of the languages spoken the dangers of assimilation will even be greater than they are right now for the Acadian and Francophone population and assimilation is a perennial struggle. It is a reality that we live with continually. As much as there have been significant improvements in terms of access to French language government services, the development of community infrastructure, support of community and cultural activities, the building of French- first language schools and a much more favourable attitude towards bilingualism the dangers will never completely disappear. And diluting the French speaking population would also be a disservice to the education system that has promoted bilingualism for the past 25 years.

Secondly, there are a number of countries where French is the main language or one of the main languages where recruitment of immigrants could be done. According to the 31<sup>st</sup> annual statistical review published by the Provincial Treasury in June of 2005, France is PEI's third most valuable trading partner for the year 2004 behind the USA and Japan. Increasing french language immigration can serve to support the business equation and further support the diversification of Island markets. And it's noteworthy to mention that the Acadian and Francophone community of PEI has already benefited from immigration over the years and one example is right across the street-Veteran's Affairs establishing their headquarters here in Charlottetown in the early 1980s certainly made a difference for the Acadian and Francophone community. And we all know that there are important benefits to having a more bilingual society by virtue of immigration or otherwise such as increased capacity to enhance the federal presence in this province, increased trading with French speaking countries, retention of bilingual graduates. You spoke about migration. I believe I'm quite familiar with the story you mentioned and it is a severe reality in our community. Increased employment opportunities, increased French language tourism, an increased capacity to provide government services in French.

With the expansion of French language government services and the building of French first language schools and community centres over the last decade the province is much, much better equipped to receive French speaking immigrants. There's still work to be done especially in the access to French language health services but the province is really in a better position overall. We've certainly seen the capacity increase over the last 25 years which most of my years have been spent this province.

Thirdly, when you consider demographic in the Acadian and Francophone community, well we are suffering the same fate as the rest of the Island population. We are aging. But we're doing so at a faster rate than the overall Island population. According to the 2001 census the proportion of people over 65 years old was 12.8 per cent of the overall Island population. Among individuals who have French as their mother tongue this proportion was 23 per cent. That's almost double the rate of the overall Island population.

We're a rural community and I heard you during the previous presentation speak to that as well. And as with such communities we're victims of the rural migration of our young people to urban centres on the Island and to urban centres off-Island. And as Honourable Minister Brown mentioned a little while ago there were six individuals from a business in our community left over the weekend. They were part of a larger group of people. There were 17 in total, 17 young men, fathers of families left for the oil rigs in Alberta. So that immediately has an impact in a small rural community.

Recognizing this issue in the last year the Acadian and Francophone community renewed its community's strategic plan for the period 2005-2009. It's called "Vision Project". We've been aware of this issue for some time and have tried to struggle and grapple with it and do something. One of the objectives identified in the Vision Project was increasing the French speaking population on PEI and some of the planned activities include repatriation initiatives for youth who've moved away, carrying out a development project on the ability of the Acadian and Francophone community to welcome new immigrants and developing and implementing an immigration strategy in order to recruit French speaking immigrants. This work should result in

increasing the number of skilled bilingual resources on PEI and will have a positive impact both within the Acadian and Francophone community as well on Island society as a whole. Work on the Vision Project activities pertaining to immigration has begun. A working committee was formed last February to explore a Francophone immigration strategy for the Acadian and Francophone Community of PEI and this working committee includes community representatives as well as representatives from various governmental departments such as Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Rural Secretariat and the provincial government through its Acadian and Francophone Affairs Division.

La Région Évangéline was approached by representatives from the community of Saint-Léonard in New Brunswick to take part in a sustainable community development project with immigration as its emphasis. It is being funded by the Rural Secretariat under their models for rural development and community capacity building program. So the objective of this project is to develop a guide to innovative practices in rural immigration in order to promote a sustainable, social, economic, educational and cultural development of the three partner sites - one in New Brunswick, one in PEI and one in Manitoba.

The second objective is to promote demographic growth and cultural diversity in Francophone and rural communities. To date a strategic framework has been developed to foster immigration to Francophone minority communities and it was published in November, 2003 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. And Prince Edward Island had a representative on its steering committee, Mr. Zaïn Esseghaïer, who works for the French Language School Board and is himself a French speaking immigrant to PEI. We have a copy of this report and we will be submitting it for your perusal.

An immigration readiness assessment of Francophone minority communities was also published in March, 2004 by a consulting firm for the benefit of Fédération des communautés acadienne francophone Canada and this report includes five case studies of Francophone communities in various provinces across the country including one on PEI's Acadian and Francophone Community. The case study identified the fact that there is no organization in

the province that systemically offers integration services in French to French speaking immigrants. At this time most, if not all, of the French speaking immigrants who come to PEI come from other Canadian provinces so it is easier to integrate them into our communities. And the report that we will be submitting to you as well will be of use to the committee members maybe in considering the issues of specific concern to Acadian and the Francophone community.

I just wanted to mention a particular example that we have had in our community. You've probably all heard of the Masarabakiza family. The African family, the refugees from Burundi that lived in the Evangeline region until last June. And this example, I think, illustrates with a very much of a reality base the immigration and integration issues that we face as an Acadian and Francophone community and I'm sure at a broader level as well. There were no resources to help us and to help this family integrate into our community and basically it was by hook or by crook that we enabled this family to survive for two years. Community buy-in became very critical. Community voluntarism became the essence of what helped this family integrate in our community. The numbers of phone calls, the numbers of informal committees that were put together, the numbers of people who offered to drive these people to appointments, the numbers of people who offered to tutor the children in French, the people who volunteered to look after the school and prepare the other school children for the arrival of these children. It was quite an experience and quite a learning.

So should the government of PEI invest in recruiting immigrants, including French speaking immigrants, it will have to invest in facilitating the reception of these people in the province. Services will need to be culture and language specific. Our example with the Masarabakiza family, we had no blueprint and we had no support. We did what we thought we could do but it would be very important to recognize this when we are preparing to receive immigrants into our Acadian and Francophone communities.

A fourth point and lastly-we believe that whatever type or scope of immigration initiatives that the province undertakes, there is a great need for education and awareness among the general public about immigration in general and whatever

the government objectives are. We still are an insular population and the reality is that there is racism and discrimination out there and we faced that when the Masarabakiza family came to live in our community. We didn't call it that but it's there. We overcame some things and education and awareness are key to issues like that. I'm sure you've heard it from various presenters and within the written submissions that you have received. The government of PEI would have a responsibility to ensure public awareness because without community support and community buy-in we believe that immigrant recruitment initiatives would be bound to fail. Education and awareness will be key should the government go ahead with an immigration strategy.

Finally we would like to congratulate the government of PEI and this committee for taking a proactive approach to immigration by soliciting public input on this issue.

*Merci beaucoup Monsieur le Président et les autres membres du comité, et de la part du Comité avoisière acadien et francophone, sur les affaires acadiennes et francophones, je vous remercie de cette opportunité.*

Thank you very much Mr. Chairperson and the other members of the committee, and on behalf of the Acadian and Francophone Advisory Committee on Acadian and Francophone Affairs, I thank you for this opportunity.

On behalf of the Acadian Communities Advisory Committee I sincerely thank you for this opportunity and I will distribute a copy of the presentation.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** *Merci beaucoup Jeannita. Présentation très claire, très informative et bien appréciée.*

Thank you very much Jeannita. Presentation was very clear, very informative and much appreciated.

I hope that you'll be entertaining a few questions from the committee members. And we'll start with Eva.

**Eva Rodgeron (PC):** I'm just wondering and maybe you will be able, you say this family has left in June and I know sometimes this is private information but is there anything again that if we'd

had something different in place that would have made a difference? Are they still on the Island?

**Jeannita Bernard:** No, they left. They moved to Quebec. They probably are not the typical type of immigrant that we may have and I'm speaking from personal thought here, personal opinion. They came from a refugee camp. They lived in a refugee camp for ten years. They had most of their children in that refugee camp. And when they came to PEI they were thrilled to come to a country where freedom reigned and they thought that they were going to be with others who were coming from the camp as well and most of the others went to Quebec, to Quebec City, where there is an Association. So that is a point that maybe something could be done about. And they thought they were going to be with their friends. At the end of the two years they learned where Quebec was and they decided that they would try to integrate there where they would have that support.

The children integrated extremely well. And it is, again personal opinion, if they had remained in our community the children would have benefited greatly. They integrated like that. The parents were extremely courageous. She did not speak the language at all. She spoke her local dialect and I don't think she had any education at all and found it very, very difficult to communicate. He communicated extremely well in French and so did the children. They were tutored. Maybe a committee or maybe a plan, a planned reception of these immigrants would have made a big difference, would have kept them in our community. We learned a lot.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** I think I noticed when the family arrived, I think in July they were seen wearing winter parkas. Quite a shock coming from such a warm country. Cletus.

**Cletus Dunn (PC):** I guess you sort of touched on it, Eva, was Quebec is struggling with population numbers. In your research-I'm very interested in what you're talking about by recruiting Francophone from Francophone countries- is Quebec doing something similar as well?

**Jeannita Bernard:** I'm not aware if they are or not? Maybe the . . .

**Cletus Dunn (PC):** Because they would be our

main competitors right now and New Brunswick.

**Dominique Chouinard:** Actually Quebec has an immigration strategy that targets Francophone countries and that's their main market.

**Cletus Dunn (PC):** Are they targeting, like when you talked about our third strongest trading partner is France, are they targeting France or just African countries that are Francophone?

**Dominique Chouinard:** All of the countries that have French language.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Dominique, for the record would you identify yourself and you're welcome to stay.

**Dominique Chouinard:** My name is Dominique Chouinard. I work as an administrative assistant to the committee and I work for Acadian Francophone Affairs.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Thank you. I heard through media articles of sort that Manitoba was having a lot of success in attracting immigrants and particularly Francophone immigrants. Do you have any background on their activities?

**Jeannita Bernard:** Well, they are a partner in the community, the model development strategy for the Rural Secretariat. I don't have any background personally. I'm not sure if Dominique has or not but we can certainly get it for you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Philip, you're next.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** Indeed to be part of a community is critical to the success of immigration. And it's kind of, I guess, I'm not sure what the right word is but Canada is a land of immigrants. We should be good at (indistinct). We've done it from the time that Cabot and Cartier got here and we always did, whether it be the Acadians or the Irish or the Scottish, they all needed a community too and they brought their traditions and who they were and, of course, for some of who have been here for five or six generations we think that's the way normal is but it certainly wasn't normal when they got here because they had to bring that.

So I think your presentation kind of adds weight to

the idea that an immigration policy to be successful has to be targeted enough to allow potential immigrants to build a community on PEI and we have to be aware of their needs and so to allow their needs to take expression. When we don't understand stuff because we're not educated, we're not aware of their needs, that's where you do hit this underlying and I don't think it's malicious but it's because we're not aware because there's differences and the lack of understanding of those differences express themselves in distasteful behaviour. But I think if there is enough of an intensity of immigrants from a particular area we will allow that expression to evolve.

**Jeannita Bernard:** Yes, if I may, I think that was one of our learnings with the Masarabakiza family—the lack of understanding of a different culture, the need for them to fit within our community base. Thank goodness we had the language. Culturally it was quite a stretch for many of our Island residents or Evangeline region residents.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** I know my sister-in-law came from the Philippines and I mean that's only one person and the challenge that she had. And it's a two-way thing. It's also on the immigrant who's experiencing vast differences in lifestyle and not understanding why we do what we do and how we do it. And so you have to allow that person to grow in their understanding and then we have to grow in a reciprocal understanding of what's going on. And it's tough.

**Jeannita Bernard:** For sure. Our experience, if we had had a blueprint or something, I can't even describe it at this point, it would have made a big difference. Not having a model, not being sure you kind of hobble along. We succeeded, I'd say, but there were things missing, like frameworks or examples. All we had was our good will.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) Chair:** Okay, there being no further questions, *Jeannita, Dominique, au nom du comité, je vous remercie pour la présentation, pour l'information que vous avez apportée. La composante francophone de l'immigration est extrêmement importante au volet et puis vous avez su bien faire le point.*

Jeannita, Dominique, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for your presentation, for the information you provided. The Francophone

component of immigration is an extremely important component and you presented it well.

On behalf of the committee, as I was saying, on behalf of the committee you've done an extremely fine job in bringing the information necessary for us to proceed with our work. The Francophone component to the immigration file is extremely important and you've brought very pertinent information to allow us to proceed with our work. Again, merci beaucoup.

**Jeannita Bernard:** Merci. Thank you.

### **Part III - Patricia Diaz**

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** The next presenter is Patricia Diaz. Patricia, welcome to our committee.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** And if you would be so kind to give us a brief background on yourself. I do believe you're presenting on behalf of yourself.

**Patricia Diaz:** Yes, that's correct.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** After you've done your—after you present yourself, please carry on with the presentation. We'll allow you 15 to 20 minutes for the presentation which will be followed by a brief question period, so please proceed.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you very much and good morning, everybody. I apologize, my voice is not the clearest of all. You must know, I've been sick with the flu but I didn't want to cancel today because I did cancel before and my apologies for that.

Basically, my presentation is going to encompass the following points. First of all, I would like to share with you an overview of my background. I have lived in Prince Edward Island for the past 22 years. The theme of my presentation or my background, I will share with you the reasons why I have chosen to first of all, become a Canadian; to remain in Prince Edward Island; to start a business and to keep growing a business; and why Prince Edward Island has become my home. And hopefully, I will shed some light into some of the

questions that have been posed previously.

Then I will proceed to talk about my own experience in dealing with immigrants as a teacher of English as a foreign language. That has been part of my career for the past 28 years and I have delivered that training both in Mexico City and in Canada, Prince Edward Island in particular and I shall finish by issuing some recommendations that I would like to submit for your consideration which will hopefully help in your endeavours.

Having said that, I was born and raised in Mexico City. When I first learned about Prince Edward Island, I happened to have earned already a degree in Business Administration and the president of my alma mater had invited me to teach English there. So I met a wonderful Island man from PEI with whom I fell in love and he told me when I first talked to him, he had this red beard on and I thought he was from Ireland. I had lived in England actually, studied at Oxford where I became a translator, certified translator and interpreter and teacher of English as a foreign language. He said—no, I don't come from Ireland but my grandfather came from Tipperary, Ireland. I'm from PEI. And I looked at him and said—what's PEI? And that question is a key question throughout my presentation. What's PEI?

I am talking about the early 80s. Well we had quite a romance. He explained to me what PEI was all about and he said to me—I tell you what, let's go to the Canadian Embassy here in Mexico City and I'm going to show you some pictures of my province and so off we went. And to his disappointment, there were no pictures whatsoever of PEI. So he was very upset and he complained to the ambassador cause he thought it was pretty outrageous that there was no package of information of the beautiful province of PEI.

Then he said to me—look, it's such a beautiful—it's a paradise, Patricia, and we have somewhere—well, where are you located? Well it's Atlantic Canada, up north. So I said—I have to go and visit. So sure enough in December of 1982, I came to PEI on holidays to spend Christmas with my at-the-time boyfriend and at that time, we had to catch the ferry to get to Borden so my sister-in-law picked us up there and all the way from Borden to Charlottetown, I asked her several times to stop so that I could take pictures of the lovely, hilly roads, the houses that were all with Christmas

decorations covered by the snow and she said—wait a minute, you're a well-travelled woman. What's so special about these? I said—these are like fairy tale houses. This is absolutely beautiful. I've been to Switzerland. I've been to many different places but this is very special.

So I spent Christmas here and it was quite an experience for me to go through all the Christmas dinner preparations and the likes. The next year I came back in December again to marry Arthur in January of 1984. We were happily married for 10 years. Upon our separation, he chose to move to Mexico City and I chose to stay here. The reason being, we had reached the point in our lives where we were going in very different directions and we recognized that and I think it was for the benefit of both of us. I understand that he has blossomed as a professional and he is the chair of a renowned university, a private university. He chose the department of English and I had already started out my company, Latin Access.

Latin Access was set up in 1993. Its focus is the rendering of intercultural communication services and it was actually set up as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement which in 1994 became a reality. My company is now 12 years old. We have cater services in more than 50 different languages to date. I am very proud of the achievements there and I think that the only reason why my company and I, myself, have been able to grow and blossom here is because of not only the people of the Island; it's also the environment; it's the peace of mind that I find here; it's the low crime rate that we have.

I come from a city of 20 million people at the time, nowadays, 2005, there are 30 million people in Mexico City. When I first landed here, people would ask me—don't you miss Mexico? You must be awfully lonely. Granted - I was proficient in English. I was a teacher of English and a translator and interpreter already and I would say—no, I'm very happy to be in a smaller place. I don't like larger cities anymore, 20 million people, that's just too much.

So I wanted to address here for the Honourable Philip Brown and somebody else was asking, was it perhaps the Honourable Richard Brown who was saying, should we be looking at bringing in immigrants from larger cities or not. I think that immigrants from larger cities who are able to

appreciate the quality of life that Prince Edward Island offers, who are able to experience the people of the Island and who have the right attitude to embrace the culture, the values and beliefs of this province will suddenly fit in and will stay on the way I have done for the past 22 years.

These will be immigrants who understand that there is a lot of value in raising families within an environment where we can have access to nutritious food, where we have primary industries such as agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture that are so precious in the world and on that subject, I wanted to share with you my own view. I do hope that in your strategy and when government sits down and decides who is going to be targeted, the opportunity to bring in immigrants from cultures where they understand and value those primary industries will not be overlooked.

When I first saw the green fields of this Island, the healthy crops that we have, I remember saying to my husband at the time—one day, I will do a project of some sort whereby Mexicans and Prince Edward Islanders will exchange technology and knowhow because I would like to see the producers from Mexico learning to take pride in the land the way many Island producers do and I would like to see a lot of those Mexican producers going back to the fields instead of living in poverty in urban centers. Here I tie that in with immigrants because that's exactly what has happened.

For those immigrants who have come to Prince Edward Island and for some reason have not been able to either integrate or to feel that they belonged here, to find suitable employment, they go to a larger city. They go to Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, et cetera. How sad it is to see people leaving places like Prince Edward Island. How sad it would be the day that Prince Edward Island loses the strength that its primary industries bring. So that's very important.

Yes, I realize that Aerospace is very important. I realize IT is important but I tell you, we are privileged to have the development, the level of development and the quality of primary industries of this province. How do you say that - fill out my life on the Island. Besides having working at the Convention Centre which at the time was labelled as a "White Elephant", if you may recall that. It was a Hilton and it was a major investment, I believe, of 30 million people and a lot of people

were skeptical as to whether it was going to be a profitable business or not.

I was hired as a waitress in despite of having applied for a supervisory role, I had a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Major in Management of Tourism Enterprises. I was fully proficient in English, French, German and Spanish. So the first salary I earned was \$3.25 an hour and I recall the day of my job interview and I was all dressed up in this designer's suit because I was applying for a managerial position or at least a supervisory role and the interview committee said to me—well you know, I was interviewed in French, German and English and they knew they were getting a very good employee. They said—well the only job we can offer you at this point is as a waitress. But I have been the head of Public Relations at the largest hotel in Mexico City. How come you offer me this job? Well, take it or leave it and you have to decide now. Because look, have a look - do you see all that lineup? This is our unemployed people on this Island and they would love to get this job.

So I had tears in my eyes. I bit my tongue and I said—I take it. Because what I thought was, this is the only way I am going to get my foot in the door. This is the only way I am going to learn about this business culture and this culture at large, so I did. So when I got my—I got on the job as a hostess by then because there was a delay in the processing of my immigration papers and my work permit, I was advised that they no longer required waitresses but they didn't want to loose me so they were going to hire me as a hostess.

I remember quite vividly, a member of the staff, a waitress who came right up to me and she said—so you're from away. Where are you from? I'm from Mexico City. Well I don't understand why you were giving a job that by rights, should have been given to an Islander. We have a high unemployment rate. I just let her be. I said—well I realize there this is a high unemployment rate but I think I'm half an Islander because I'm married to an Islander. So this is my new home and she wasn't happy. She said—you married an Islander, so on top of that, you took away one of the few eligible bachelors on the Island.

Well, at that point, my Mexican blood really got boiling and I said—well there must be something really wrong with the Island women's marketing

skills because let me tell you, dear, that my marriage came about over the telephone and it took two minutes for the whole deal to be defined and I left it at that. That same waitress, a year later, when she was leaving for another job, came up to me and she taught me another lesson—she came up to me and she apologized. She said—I was very wrong to have treated you the way I did. That meant the world to me. It was very, very moving to hear that from an Islander.

So I have learned a lot throughout my 22 years being here. I had the pleasure of teaching English as a second language for Holland College for five years. In that job, I had the pleasure of actually meeting Thilak. I didn't teach Thilak but my husband at the time, I think, probably gave you a few lessons there. I learned a lot about what immigrants go through when attempting to settle into the community. Most of them were refugees from an array of countries whether Eastern Europe or whether China, from Syria, Lebanon, you name it. The financial and psychological stresses that their adjustment to Prince Edward Island were varied and often times were severe. I oftentimes tried to encourage them to try to see the positive side of things, to develop a positive attitude because it is our attitude whether we are Islanders or people from away that will allow us to really work together.

Unfortunately, yes, a lot of them highly qualified did leave the Island. They felt that there were no employment opportunities here. Some of them—I remember some of them questioned whether they were being punished by the Canadian government by having been sent to Prince Edward Island. I said—what do you mean? This is a very small place. Well it is a small but understand what the strengths of the place are all about and that is what I really believe. We need to embed in a marketing and promotion strategy if we really want to attract immigrants to this province.

I think one of my recommendations would be to start by disseminating the word. Let people know that Prince Edward Island exists. Let people know about the strengths and sure, weaknesses of PEI, but also the challenges and opportunities that it represents. Once we do that and I think these, I'll tell you why, through my company I participate in several trade missions abroad. I go to trade shows with the many different organizations and I always start by giving a pitch on what PEI is, where

it is located, about our strengths, about our economy.

Once I do that, then people will be able to establish some rapport and then we can get down to business. But if we really did that, I think we would take, we would really be—we would have an advantage over other provinces. Sell the uniqueness of this Island. That's what has been very—that has been really powerful for me. I sell the uniqueness of the services of my company and PEI has tremendous uniqueness. Just look at the crime rate. The first thing that I observed when I came to PEI is that women and men and children appear to be very relaxed. They appear to be very safe. Women were not hanging onto their purses, afraid that somebody was going to snatch them away.

So we have some wonderful values, beliefs and principles in this province that are no longer available in many other parts of the world. But by the same token, I would urge this committee and government to scrutinize very well the people that we're welcoming to this Island. I realize we have the PEI Nominee Program, in fact my company has had the honour of rendering services for some of those candidates. I realize that government is moving right along and yes, we need immigrants to be here. There's no question about it. But something that is going to be interesting as well is to promote the fact that besides being an Island, here people can truly learn to enjoy life.

In Mexico City, I worked as I said as an English professor and later on I became an entrepreneur and I would sell packages, training packages teaching English to government officials and the corporate sector. I had a very good lifestyle. I really didn't come here seeking a better life. I came here following the man I loved and I'm glad I did. But having said that, when I compare the lifestyle I had there, I would leave home at 7:00 a.m. in the morning and I wouldn't get back home until 10:00 p.m. No homemade meals at lunchtime. Here on the Island, my office is in the mall downtown. I live on Richmond Street. I can have a hearty nutritious breakfast at home, go back home for lunch, go back home for dinner. I can have a walk. I can go to the fitness centre. I can have a life and that is precious, indeed it is.

Now having said that, I wanted to share with you something else in terms of the recommendations

that I would like to submit for your consideration. I would suggest a target - younger immigrants, single people. For example, the students, professionals, trades people from diverse cultures. Diversity is very important because that is precisely what makes a community rich is this exchange and variety of values and beliefs and traditions and customs. Of course, under the umbrella of Canadian culture, if we can call it that, a Canadian culture. But also, to try to target younger couples interested in raising a family in a safe and prosperous environment.

When I married Arthur, of course, I wanted to raise a family. We both wanted to have children but we found it was very expensive and frankly, we couldn't afford it. My husband chose to start up a small business shortly after we got married so basically, we were depending on my steady revenue at the Convention Centre and when I was teaching for Holland College and in 1985, when the earthquake hit Mexico City, my parents who had been very well off, in a matter of seconds, became absolutely homeless and they were left on the street in bare feet. So that forced me to seek other jobs and I had three jobs at the time. I was a hostess at the Convention Centre. I would teach the night program of English as a second language for Holland College and I would also work at Boutique Fiesta in retail selling clothes.

Now the benefit of these and I go back to the issue of attitude. At the Convention Centre, I had an opportunity to meet and network with politicians and business people. At Boutique Fiesta, I had an opportunity to meet the wives of those politicians and the wives of those business people and I started to learn about the power of networking on this Island. So as I said, had I had an attitude and said—no, I'm not going to have three jobs at minimum wage, you know, I probably wouldn't have made it.

Am I proud of what I have done? Yes, I am, because I have learned a lot. I learned the meaning of having to make ends meet. I learned the meaning of having to give to my community out of a need for my heart because when my parents got homeless, it was this community that gave me tremendous support. The Catholic church organized a collection of monies that helped me go down to Mexico to help my parents when we found them. It was my co-workers at the Convention Centre who raised money to help me

as well on that trip.

In 1989, I became a Rotarian and I am still a Rotarian with the Charter Royalty Rotary Club and my fellow Rotarians are my family. I have no other relatives on the Island. In 1989, July 1<sup>st</sup>, I had the honour and privilege of becoming a Canadian. I took five years before making that decision and yes, the road was bumpy. The first year of having lived here, I tell you, I loved my husband a lot but I went to a Travel Agency. I bought a one-way ticket from Charlottetown to Mexico and I said to my husband—I love you dearly but I don't fit here. I just don't feel I belong. You know where to find me if you really love me. I'm gone. I'm history and he challenged me. He said—of course, you're going to run back to daddy's arms because you cannot take this new culture and that challenge made me stay and I'm glad he challenged me.

Five years later, I became a Canadian and I am very proud of having been embraced by this community. I'm very proud of the opportunities that have been provided to me and I am proud of the fact that I have been listened to because I'm very active with the Chamber of Commerce and my fellow business people have always been very open and receptive to my suggestions and to my style of doing business. Although in the beginning I was labelled as being too aggressive in my marketing skills.

I guess basically, that's all that I wanted to share with you. One more item though that I also wanted to share in terms of my background - in the 80s I was the national secretary of the organization called, National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada. My own portfolio was to advocate—it was an advocacy group—to advocate on behalf of that constituency in event of a seminar to women in regard to their accessibility to training and labour market opportunities and this was esteemed by the fact that I saw my immigrant female students in the classroom at Holland College going through a lot of challenges and barriers and I wanted to do something to help them.

Later on, I served as an advisor to the representative of women's issues on the Canadian Labour Force Development Board. So labour market issues are very close to my heart. Prince Edward Island's economic development is very close to my heart and I will do and I dare say,

Patricia Diaz' Latin Access will do as much as we can to help your government in this endeavour of attracting new immigrants to Prince Edward Island. That's all.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Thank you very much, Patricia Diaz. Your presentation was very energetic and it certainly reflects on the fact that you are a very energetic person.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** And it's a very interesting background and a very interesting perspective that you bring to this table and I'm very appreciative of that and I'm sure everyone of the-- every member of this committee would share the same opinion of that.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** We'll open the floor to questions, Patricia, and we'll start off with Helen.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Patricia, I really enjoyed your presentation and your enthusiasm and all of the hardships you've had to go through. I'm really glad you did and you certainly brought a different perspective to what maybe we've heard in the prior presentations.

A couple of things that you said that we should be trying to attract are younger people and different diversities. Now when we look at different diversities, I think of the Dutch community and they've been so successful here because they had their own community and I think that's why they were successful here. They were hard workers. They liked this way of life but they had that community here that they could, they've become almost just--it wouldn't matter if they were from Tignish or Souris, this is their community and I think that's why they were successful.

I wondered when you were saying different diversities and we think of the Chinese gentleman that has come into Summerside and of course, there's not very many Chinese people in Summerside and all he is looking for is just somebody to welcome him and you elated to that when you spoke about--just somebody would give you the chance, you could take it from there and you were on your way. So all you were doing was

just looking for somebody just to welcome you.

**Patricia Diaz:** Yes and actually, I wasn't seeking more Mexicans. I wasn't interested. I really didn't have that need, that need of support. Perhaps because I was proficient in English and I also came--and I was well travelled and I came with the attitude that this is a new culture and I want to learn from them. I want to see how they do things. Right? So I wasn't missing tortillas and black beans and tacos and the likes. No, I understood very clearly--my father always, he was a very well travelled man. My grandfather was an ambassador to Europe and several Latin American countries and both of them were multilingual. So he always said, my father said--when in Rome, do as the Romans do. That has always remained with me and I think it's a very wise piece of advice.

So I really believe that there will be other immigrants like myself who would be very happy to set up shop here without really looking at the fact that oh, maybe there aren't all that many Argentians or there aren't all that many people from Switzerland or whatever. So I think that the market is quite open as well and also the fact that they may come from larger cities should not be something that would detain us from inviting them to Canada because probably those are the people that would really appreciate this environment. They're ready to enjoy it. They need it.

**Helen MacDonald (PC):** Thank you.

**Wilbur MacDonald (PC) (Chair):** Eva.

**Eva Rodgerson (PC):** I just wanted to make a comment more than anything. I wanted to thank you for presenting today and I found your presentation very uplifting because all the things that you said is what I value. When you talk about--sometimes people say, oh you live in PEI; you live in the sticks or whatever. Well I never thought of it that way and I almost think if we had more people like yourself that was trying to sell what we have here, we wouldn't be looking at these issues because overall, the values that I value each day is just like you said, the way of life and to me, putting me in an area where all I'd see everyday was just concrete and traffic and cars, to me I couldn't survive in that.

So I think what you presented here today is really

what we have here our most valuable resources. We have wonderful—and we can live here. So I'm glad you came today and brought that back to perspective.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you. If I may something, one suggestion would be perhaps to organize some sort of trade mission from PEI to a target market and then to give a tourism pitch because tourism is a great avenue to promote a place and also invite the fellows from Economic Development to give their pitch in terms of business opportunities for immigrant investors and people who want to come here and set up shop.

Education as well, when couples, when friends of mine ask me from different cultures, like what's life like in Canada, and where do you live? They want to know in terms of education. What kinds of school system do they have available? How many languages are taught in schools? You see, Canada abroad in most countries has produced this image of being an official bilingual country where English and French are spoken anywhere and everywhere in this land. So a lot of people, a lot of foreigners when they come here are quite surprised that certain regions are mostly Anglophone or mostly Francophone, to say the other side of the coin. But I think that's very, very important and the preparation also goes and this was discussed earlier by one of the presenters.

We need to be prepared as Islanders to embrace immigrants but we also need to ensure that the immigrants to come in are properly briefed as to what they can expect. I think that's a two-way street, right? It's not just always being sensitive towards immigrants. Immigrants being prepared to open their minds, to have a positive attitude, to learn and to try to come together with Islanders so Islanders don't feel threatened like that lady that I shared with you about—where immigrants are taking jobs away from them. You know, that by right, they should be given. But on the contrary, that we are together on this boat, because it's a given that Canada and Prince Edward Island certainly needs more immigrants if we want to move forward in life. I mean, our school system, there are going to be a lot of empty seats in the schools very soon if we don't have the children and youth, employment, et cetera.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** The next question will be from Cletus followed by Jim.

**Cletus Dunn (PC):** Thank you very much for your presentation. It was quite entertaining as well as informative. I probably consider you probably the exception rather than the rule as an immigrant. I wish all immigrants had your enthusiasm to *when you're in Rome, do as the Romans do*. I guess sometimes our vision of immigrants is very cloudy. In the 50s, we had the Hungarian immigrants who came because of the Hungarian Revolution. The Dutch immigrants were probably an exceptional group because they came with money and resources. But most immigrants we see as refugees rather than investors. So sometimes our envision of immigrants is low skilled, low income, maybe taking away meaningless jobs or small jobs; and sometimes not very important to them because they come and they're treated as a sort of poverty part of society.

How do we overcome this stigma in our culture?

**Patricia Diaz:** I think partly it's the work of the immigrants themselves because you're absolutely right, I think the term "immigrant" has adopted a negative connotation. In fact, when I was president of the Immigrant Women's group, we talked about it and we talked about becoming perhaps an international women's group or something of that nature. I think it's important to create an awareness of what immigrants can bring to the community, the benefits of that and also, it's a matter of—on the part of the immigrant.

For example, my first salary was minimum salary, right, 3.25. And I said—my father didn't send me to Oxford to earn \$3.25 an hour. I didn't earn a degree to do that plus I wanted a return on my investment. It was all private schooling. So with that in mind, I think it is important that the business sector, employers are willing to recognize that the fact that people from other countries are willing and interested in coming to work here. Let's say, trades people, skilled labour, that doesn't necessarily mean cheap labour. I think it's a matter of treating each other with respect. It's a matter of net worth, recognizing our net worth and coming together to make things happen for the betterment of this community.

To me, it has been a struggle in many instances, right? Because of my accent—and I must tell you the business facts is that oftentimes people say—there is an accent and people kind of freak out about an accent. Right? So what I have

learned to do is I don't let comments on accents bother me. I don't let comments like "*Oh but you're from away*". Well yes, I am from away but I can do things. The knowhow, allow immigrants to demonstrate they can do what they do, their trades, their profession. Give them a chance to prove themselves.

Linguistic barriers might be a major issue and again, I have no idea how you're strategizing in that regard but without the language and I'm not talking about just terminology, I'm talking without a full understanding of the meaning of words on the part of foreigners. People cannot function in this community. Like I have serious concerns and I will be sending a note to the head of the Immigrant Investors Program because a foreigner, somebody who is not fluent in English or French, to come into Canada and to be expected to participate on a board of some sort of a corporation and to be part of the decision-making process. The level of proficiency in terms of linguistics is very high and I understand that right now the parameter is just one year of language training that they have to prove they have undertaken.

But I can tell you this, having taught English as a second language for 28 years, very few people would really grasp the language to that level within a year. So people need to open their minds and understand that immigrant doesn't mean cheap labour. Immigrant doesn't mean second-class citizen. Immigrant means an opportunity to work together and to be more productive together.

**Cletus Dunn (PC):** I guess we're all immigrants from a different day.

**Patricia Diaz:** There you go.

**Jim Bagnall (PC):** Thank you for your presentation. I really enjoyed it. You gave a life experience of what an immigrant does go through when they move into a foreign country. I guess I relate a little bit to that when I first started out in my years, although I was being transferred in Canada, in Atlantic Canada, I got seven transfers in two years and I moved into six different communities and when you move into a new community, you don't know anybody and you have to learn to make-meet your own friends so I know a little bit exactly what you go through in that light.

I always related to—in Montague where I live now that I was there for probably 23 years and when I started campaigning to be in government, I knocked on a door and this elderly gentleman said—Come in, oh you're that young fellow that just moved into town that works at Stedman's. Like 22 years ago, I moved into Montague but I was still someone that just moved into, in his mind, I wasn't a Montague person, I was somebody that moved there. So that part of it I understand.

But I guess the question I was going to ask you is that a program—should there be a better program for immigrants coming into Canada on education? An entrepreneur program maybe for trades people that maybe moving into Canada or into our province? And also, maybe a management program for skilled labour of people of your own profession that when you move into this country, that you have a six-month entrepreneur program set up with maybe Rodd's Hotels or the Tourist Bureaus or whatever. Should these be part of our immigrant strategy and how long a program? I'm saying maybe six months but maybe should it be two years? What's your opinion on that?

**Patricia Diaz:** I think it's going to depend on, first of all, the level of proficiency in English of the candidate to this program. I think yes, a minimum of six months. Perhaps it could be four months but it is important when we're talking about education. The expectations in terms of education—education is a commodity in many cultures. We happily pay for education but by the same token, a lot of these immigrants that I think would be wonderful for this Island—the first question they're going to ask is how many languages are being taught in the school system?

In other words, they don't expect only that they, it's going to be given in their minds that English and French are there. Okay, to begin, English and French are compulsory. But they're going to question how many other foreign languages are the kids going to learn?

When I graduated from university in 1981 in Mexico City, in order to earn my degree at a Bachelor's Level, it was compulsory to prove that I was proficient in two foreign languages. I choose English and French. So I'm talking about 1981 so this tells you that all the cultures are much more advanced in that profile. So in terms of education,

you're going to—in terms of educating them as to what they can expect to learn about how we do things, our protocol at a social level, at a business level. I think it depends on the level of English of the candidates that are going to be there, the participants in the program. Anywhere from—it could be two months, four months, six months. I'm thinking like a multilevel class here, type of thing.

The entrepreneurial for entrepreneurs very important. I actually would think it's vital that we brief them on our business practices. Let's not forget that concepts such as business ethics are very different in each culture. In some cultures, bribery is part of the daily activity. So it's important that we brief them of that because that way we are preserving our own principles and our own way of doing things and this is some sort of a protection as well. But I think it will be enriching to them to learn about how we do things.

In terms of the skilled labour, let me tell you this, on the latest trade mission I did back in February of this year, there's a tremendous surplus of skilled labour in countries like Mexico. And remember that Mexico was very active as a result of NAFTA, training their people in various skills. There are many people who would love to come to Canada. Their problem, they don't have English skills but they would be willing to learn. So maybe that's another opportunity.

Business is saying, we need the skilled labour in this area, contemplate that and put together a program where you would incorporate English as a second language plus give these people the briefing you require for them to understand the business practices and the credentials that they are supposed to get. Because recognition of credentials in Canada has been a real issue. That's why many immigrants have become bitter about being in this country.

My own sister is an example. She is not bitter but she did have quite a chore, she has a Bachelor in Science with a Major in Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacology and Masters in Marketing. She has been in Canada for 14 years and she was told right there the first time she applied for a job, she had to start all over again at university and she said—there is no way I am going to do that. So she ended up doing clerical work and that's what she has done for the past 14 years.

**Unidentified Speaker:** (Indistinct)

**Patricia Diaz:** So we don't want, I think PEI really has an advantage. Let's not make the mistakes that Canada has made with the immigrant population. Let's avoid that.

**Jim Bagnall (PC):** One more question. I think that yes, education for people coming into work here but I was thinking—my thought would be that we should have an educational program which you touched on a couple of minutes ago for foreign immigrants that are coming in that aren't, that can't speak English very well. I think that part of our strategy should be an educational English program set up for immigrants coming in as part of the package of immigrants coming to Canada. What I was wondering is how long a program do you think would be - would a two-year English program integrated because they're going to be speaking English pretty well with everybody here. Would that be sufficient to get them on track in the Canadian. . . ?

**Patricia Diaz:** For somebody who's a complete beginner with no English skills whatsoever, I would say two years is more than enough and maybe even a year and a half of an intensive program. Because Thilak, you did part of that program and it was only a link, was it just a few months, was it not?

**Thilak Tennekone:** Just a few months.

**Patricia Diaz:** But you see, a lot of these people who come with no knowledge of English whatsoever, they're not going to be able to grasp the language that quickly, and it's not just the language, right? But the understanding of how to really work in the language, function in that language.

**Jim Bagnall (PC):** Like I see that as a part of keeping our immigrants here.

**Patricia Diaz:** That's right, that would be the retention side as well.

**Jim Bagnall (PC):** Yes, because if we don't have that type of program for them, they're going to go to the large cities where there's enough people from Mexico that can speak or Chinese or whatever and they will . . .

**Patricia Diaz:** Or else what you create is ghettos where they only speak their mother tongue. We don't want to have that. We want to have integration.

**Jim Bagnall (PC):** Yes, thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** The final question coming from Philip.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** I just want to like the other members, to say thank you for coming in. Glad you're feeling good enough today to make it.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thank you.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** But you bring a different perspective, I think, from others that we've heard from and I think if you leave me with one thing, it's that immigration is not charity. Immigration is business. It's about allowing people mobility. It presents an opportunity for both the receiving country and for the immigrants to come and I really did also appreciate your words of wisdom to us that what we have to offer is based on our primary resources, the agriculture, the fishery element of our economy is attractive to many people and it's something they understand. So I think that's a very astute observation that you've made and that is beneficial to us in our deliberations.

**Patricia Diaz:** May we never lose our primary industries, I tell you. May we never do that.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Patricia, thank you very much on behalf of the committee. As I said earlier, you've brought a wealth of information to our committee. We're very grateful and we wish you luck in your future endeavours.

**Patricia Diaz:** Thanks for listening to me.

#### **Part IV - PEI Federation of Labour: Leo Cheverie**

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** The next presenter is Mr. Leo Cheverie representing the PEI Federation of Labour. Welcome Mr. Cheverie.

**Leo Cheverie:** Thank you. Good afternoon, bonjour.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** I guess we do have two more people. We'll just keep going. We still have a quorum. There's other functions going on and sometimes it's just very hard to harness all of our people. However, perhaps if you want to give us a brief—I think we know you as being associated with the Federation. Perhaps you could give us a minute introduction to the mandate of the Federation and then you can proceed with your presentation. We'll allow you 15 minutes and then we'll ask questions.

**Leo Cheverie:** I'll do it quickly, no problem. I hope the other members who have left are going to the CBC Rally, actually.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** They are.

**Leo Cheverie:** Oh good. I'm speaking on behalf of actually CUPE Prince Edward Island actually cause the (Indistinct) because the CUPE had a date two weeks from now and that's when their national convention is taking place. So someone else from the Federation will be here in two weeks. So I'll present on behalf of the CUPE Prince Edward Island. So sorry, I may have made some confusion with that.

I'm going to talk maybe similar to what maybe Patricia just talked about in terms of foreign credentials and immigration are ones that we need to be examined. But CUPE-PEI, CUPE National, I'm on their national committee dealing with any racism issues. Actually, I'm co-chair of that committee so we've dealt a lot with immigration issues and certainly dealing with looking at workers of colour and aboriginal workers in the workforce and we're certainly going to look at what's happening the demographics within Canada are changing and how we do address those questions. But in terms of this, we need to look at skill shortages, change demographics, the future workforce, funding and access to training programs and access of language and apprenticeship programs and these things are all needed to make sure to be part of PEI's immigration program so we need to address these sort of issues.

The PEI Division of CUPE represents about 2,000 workers on PEI and I've also been active with

other groups including World University Service of Canada which is a group of UPEI which has sponsored refugees in the past so I'm bringing that experience to the table and I also want to work at basically looking at work within Labour about related economic development on PEI and some of our experiences with refugee and immigration concerns and I think we also participated in the past by the province's Population Strategy which was a number of years ago.

Basically, we know that in Canada about 20 per cent of people's work is found in regulated occupations including 50 professions and 100 principal trades. I know that some immigrants in category 1 countries can easily transfer directly into a trade profession than immigrants from Asia or Africa. There are greater barriers for those people who are in these trades and professions. So employers claiming there are skill shortages of workers now or in the near future, particularly in the trades, yet there are barriers for these people to transfer with their skills.

Also, I want to highlight the issue that's critical for PEI and I think we need to—many people on PEI might not be aware of this, but analysis of our demographic trend show that by 2010, immigration will account for a net labour force growth by 2031 for a total population growth. I mean we have a birth rate of only 1.47 when 2.1 is needed just to replace the population. I think some of the reasons for this is because we do have and still have an out-migration of some of our younger people within our province. So if the issues we're trying to address are low birth rate, we also have to address out-migration of younger workers or people who are ready to enter the workforce. I think that hasn't happened.

So there are barriers that currently exist within the workforce including (Indistinct) fewer national standards in education with the portability of certain skills or training which are not being recognized for workers from different provinces let alone from those outside of Canada. Employers in Canada and this is within OECD countries to not reinvest in their workers to the degree that employers outside of Canada do within the OECD countries. We're one of the lowest and some of them were more willing than others to bring in others with skills and train their existing workforce. So sometimes rather than even training existing people, they may want to bring other people in.

Skilled workers are encouraged to immigrate but their skills and credentials aren't recognized once they arrive and I know Patricia referred to that and PLAR, Prior Learning and Recognition is not even being implemented ongoing in a systematic way across provinces or educational institutions.

For example, I work at UPEI where we train nurses but we know that many of those nurses that graduate, even though there maybe a shortage of nurses here, leave because they can get higher wages elsewhere or maybe working conditions elsewhere might be better because if there's a fewer—the population of nurses is getting older—therefore we need to replace those people and we need to also recognize those people from outside Canada with these training credentials. And we have people for example right now who've come from outside Canada who have had nursing backgrounds but can't work in the nursing profession. They may work as LNAs or in other fields and we have some members in CUPE like that.

We also need to provide support for workers to achieve recognition for their training credentials and certainly, there's also moves a foot to actually establish in Atlantic Canada a place where workers can get their training credentials recognized, sort of a center so PEI maybe should be part of—work with the other provinces to try to make sure that happens.

We've had cases on PEI, I know there was one that was an esteem jurist who moved here from India who was quite renown in his field but couldn't practice law in this province till he had additional training off Island despite the fact that he was quite renown in order to do so. So there would seem to be additional hurdles for immigrants to come here even those with extraordinary skills.

So we also need to address the needs of our workforce in the future and provide the means for workers to integrate in a workforce in our society and communities. So we need an emphasis on additional supports and resources. We only have a few centralized programs which assist new immigrants and refugees with their language and other life skills and many rural areas of the provinces don't have these programs at all.

So additional official language training supports, job entry programs, workplace events encouraging

community-based initiatives to welcome integrated newcomers are needed. These programs seem to be underfunded. I know that the local branch of the Federal Department of Immigration has been downsized. There's no public access hours. We're a province. We should have an immigration office federally that should be accessed to it so I would like the province to work with the federal government to make sure that happens.

A local organization, the PEI Association of Newcomers finds excellent help and assistance but unlimited funds so greater resources of community supports for groups like that will assist immigrants with issues regarding recognition of foreign credentials and also establishing a foreign credential center should be established in Atlantic Canada. Other assessments such as apprenticeship and evaluative testing can also be considered for immigrants or refugees and governments could also work with others to recognize the need for this recognition with employers and union groups.

Also the immigration policy federally should reflect that we need to recognize and attract integrated skill professionals and trades people to the Canadian workforce. The cost of not recognizing the international credentials should also be recognized under employment, unemployment, downsizing, restructuring, privatization and skills shortages.

I also want the panel as well, there are also some other national programs. We have 23,000 workers in Canada in the Live-in Care Giver and the seasonal Agriculture Worker Program. I know that in PEI, some people have had a hard time to get people to participate in those programs or there's some hurdles there but also I know that there's some Labour Market Development Agreements which PEI has been a partner in and one study that took place in agriculture, it basically asked that migrant farm labour be introduced in PEI.

However, it didn't really deal with the real problems of having in rural PEI we have depopulation, yet we want to create jobs in the agricultural sector. So how do we deal with having full-time people in those communities finding the work that is needed in a way that maybe even immigrants would come in and work here, move here and work in those areas? But instead of having just short-term people coming in wouldn't really stay and remain

in our communities, and it didn't really deal with the issues regarding health and safety or other concerns.

I know there was one program in Western, up in Alberton actually where they had some workers from Mexico working in Alberton and they were working with a very powerful fumigant and they weren't applying correctly. They weren't trained properly as far as I could tell and they got sick. Yet the employer in that area sent the Canadian workers to the hospital and those workers didn't have access to healthcare. I mean, how can you attract immigrants here and then treat them in that manner or fashion?

I also know that on PEI as well, that we have the lowest annual, average annual hourly rates for workers in any province. A StatsCan study of 15 different occupational profiles and PEI placed last in ten of those categories and second, third and fourth last in the remaining categories, save one. There seems to be indicated the cost of living on PEI were also higher than other provinces, particularly as far as food and accommodations went. We have a larger out-migration of young people seeking higher wages in the areas like the trades and certainly, that's true of the trades right now. This has not an ongoing concern regarding health and safety, no public transportation except for the Charlottetown area and limited childcare spaces.

So these types of barriers need to be addressed and we also need to look at more openness and fairness in hiring itself because right now, lots of hiring takes places for people who know other people. So it's harder for new people to make those connections. We also have the second highest unemployment rate in Canada - 11.5 per cent coming in by a high degree of out-migration, particularly our youth.

We've had limited and I talked about the incident regarding migrant agricultural workers but if we really need them to figure out a way to make sure that workers who do come here receive the assistance they need to perform the work safely and also in terms of making sure they have the proper medical and other benefits that other people have.

The PEI Department of Development has a program to attract immigrants to PEI, have them

use their skills, business acumen and capital to invest in our economy. But I'm not sure the training and background of the officers in their program in their own entrepreneurial field will also have also cross cultural training. So I think if we already need to have participants in their Nominee Program. People have to have post secondary education either French or English skills but are we missing out on other people who would have entrepreneurial skills or who don't have those criteria?

The Nominee for Skill Workers and where we have this labour shortage, we should bring those people here and either immigrant entrepreneurs or partners with at least \$200,000 invested in PEI. So the retention rate for these economic class immigrants to PEI is only 10 per cent. So are we bringing in the right immigrants, if people are investing here to become immigrants to Canada but then we only retain 10 per cent of those people?

So we need to attract, are there others we need to attract and there are other aspects of having them relocate here which we will need to address including many cultural and integrated factors which will assist them in their family. Perhaps we need to attract other people, rural people as opposed to people, immigrants from cities or other areas or people who would like to work in areas with the agriculture, fishery or tourism or come from rural backgrounds.

Maybe we need family and community beautification programs to assist in bringing people together and build communities. We established a strong and vibrant Lebanese community in the past 100 years based on having families unite, having communities reconnect. So currently knowing the number of refugees who've come to PEI, want to remain here and are struggling to bring other family members here but finding it financially difficult to meet immigration requirements.

So even immigrants who move here and want to move here and want to reunite with their families find it very, very hard to do that. Particularly if they're working—I know one person who was working two full-time jobs to sponsor his brother coming from Africa and he just couldn't keep working at that pace even though his brother was in a very dangerous situation and this person was

a very active member of our community here and attributed to this community.

We also need to do more on PEI and elsewhere in establishing people economically, socially and culturally. We may need to concentrate on having established host communities, develop multi cultural awareness and policies and welcome newcomers. PEI was just on—we all know the situation regarding the Noodle House, but it's a question of how do we be very proactive in creating a positive environment in our school system or in our communities so that we can develop and maintain a welcoming environment?

We also, I know of cases where we had a long haul trucker relocate here from Syria and he couldn't really continue in trucking for the base on PEI because he couldn't enter into the United States despite being a landed immigrant in Canada. Also, in working with refugee people here, one of the hardest barriers is for refugees to establish stable and meaningful employment. Their loss of documentation verifying their occupational educational status and problems with foreign credential recognition are common dilemmas.

So we need to—studies have shown we have to compensate for this, this refugees turned to social capital and social supports and these do not exist. Integration is much more difficult and they may also relocate to gain social supports since they're lacking here. I worked with—for 15 years—with refugees coming to PEI and a couple of them still remain in PEI. The vast majority of them have left and part of that is they've experienced systemic discrimination and some of them found it very difficult even though they were graduates, post secondary graduates of getting employment in their field when they graduated although some of them even went onto graduate work.

So the Canadian Race Relations Foundation supports the decision that subtle forms of discrimination are at work for visible minority immigrants. So that's still a problem in terms of employment and housing. I have a brother who is in as well—but I think we can also concentrate on the positive aspects of things. We knew in federal policies we've had different colors for bringing people here even if just for visitors.

I know recently we've had a group going to bring someone from Haiti to PEI because they were in danger of what's happening in Haiti and they had found some real barriers on the federal level and a number of years ago, we also wanted to bring a group of people to PEI from, this is visitors from the Dominican Republic before Rural Youth Day and federal immigration turned them down.

So even though we've had a strong community in PEI, who have worked very closely with people from the Dominican Republic for many years, they still didn't see that as valuable. So maybe the province can work towards that. We also know that out-migration is a huge issue in terms of the trades. Maybe the province could issue a fair wage policy so that way, we're trying to keep trades people here but maybe even attract trades people from other places knowing that they're going to be paid a fair wage.

The federal government have a fair wage policy in which case, contractors can on public projects, can't underbid by paying workers less and not paying them benefits or paying them into a pension and paying them a fixed hourly rate. So all federal projects have to pay a fair wage policy has already been determined for the province through the federal program. So all the province has to do is adopt the same fair wage scale that the federal government already does all the work for and maybe that's a way of retaining trades workers but maybe we could also bring in other immigrants who have those trades skills which we know we'll need in the future.

I know there have been barriers for both doctors. I talked to a doctor who was practicing (a number of years ago) was practicing at the Plasma Centre but she would not be allowed to practice anywhere else. Her skills, even though she was already qualified to practice in other provinces. Nurses, we've had nurses who have come who worked at nursing homes on PEI who come from other countries whose nursing skills aren't recognized but they are allowed to work as LNAs, but that's been a real problem for them.

We also need to look at what other barriers to access which is healthcare, for example. We do have a shortage of doctors and other people in the medical field. So having people come here and being aware that those shortages aren't a barrier. Employment for all members of families. Attract

some people to come here from other countries, yet they may have a partner who maybe qualified in certain areas. They may be able to find a job that may be hard for their partner to find employment. So that's a barrier for them.

ESL, some of the programs that are available. Some of them are only concentrated in certain places or maybe going for certain durations. Also in terms of training education for adults. One of the few access points for training for adult education is through the EI or the UI funds. So unless you're able to qualify for that, you're not able to get access to the training dollars that you need for other things. So maybe we need to figure out a way to have sensual skills and education that are being carried out on a regular basis.

I know that in terms of out-migration as well that even if immigrants are coming here, and part of this is sponsoring students and they take out a student loans and they want to remain on PEI but they can't get the employment they need to pay out the student loans after they graduate. So that's been a problem they've been dealing with and we also look at it in a innovative approach so current demographics, labour market jobs, education, we really look at the real integrated approach. And we also know that the aboriginal workers in Canada are the fastest growing proportion of our population in Canada.

We also need to look at what barriers for them to be part of our economy and we know that there is a wage gap between visible minorities and whites. In Canada, the whites are paid 13 per cent more ahead of visible minorities as a whole. And also immigrants, there's also declining earnings for immigrants. There used to be a time when immigrants came to Canada, they were able to get a job, employment and worked very hard and also educate the next generation for them to take over other positions and now it's harder and harder for immigrants to do that.

Certainly, there's also been a fear in terms of the immigrants coming and sort of how it changes the nature of the place. We need to have programs in place in school systems and other places to make sure that people are aware of Canada's role within the world. In fact, we take very far, fewer immigrants or refugees than many other places in the world. There are many refugees - Canada's rate of accepting refugees is actually quite low

compared to many, many other countries. And I guess last year, I did notice, I'm an alumni of Eastern Kings Consolidated School but a teacher there had a program of bringing in immigrants from Charlottetown, refugees from Charlottetown to her classes there to children who never had the opportunity to have much interaction with refugees or immigrants and have a chance to discuss it with children who moved here from other countries. That was a very positive thing of actually having people being able to be aware of what's happening in the world around them but also being very open and very accepting. So I think it's a really positive thing to do things like that in the school system itself.

I also know as well in terms of trades people saying that they leave PEI because the amount of wages they can get here are much less than they can get than if they went to Fort McMurray or some other places because they could get actually get paid a higher wage, save their money, come back here and buy a house. Whereas so many other people, if they're moving to Canada for the first time, will actually go to those locations and remain there.

I even talked to someone on the picket line in Ottawa, the CBC picket line in Ottawa last week. It was someone who was a native Islander and he said—the situation is right now with CBC is I can't transfer back to PEI because most jobs that are designated are either part-time or contract positions. They're not permanent. So there's no way for me to come back to my province so obviously, if employment is going more towards part-time or just in time, or contract workers, it's going to change the nature of people being able to remain on PEI.

I looked in Nova Scotia in terms of what they're doing. They have a Skills Nova Scotia. They have—Nova Scotia has an Immigration Strategy. They have a Nursing Strategy. There's a Strategy for Positive Aging. They have a Youth employment and skills development strategy, Aboriginal Employment Strategy and Community Development Policy Initiative and Opportunities for Prosperity. All these programs kind of work together to look at the demographics within Nova Scotia and how those things interact with each other. So I think any immigration policy has to take into account the broad picture of demographics in these other areas.

Basically, also visible minorities immigrants to Canada have—they have unemployment rates twice as high as the national average. The national average is 6.7 per cent but their unemployment rate is far higher than that and I think the situation on PEI, because we have a high unemployment rate to begin with, is also much higher than that. Minorities are also under represented in a better paying, more secure areas as management and professional and they are actually more concentrated and over represented in many low paying occupations. So what we really may want to do is find a way of making sure those opportunities are there for all people who move to Canada and also make sure that immigration rules federally are more open so that basically that we can attract more people coming here.

If we do want to have rural workers or people coming from other countries who may work in fisheries or agriculture or tourism and the federal rules of which they say who's desirable about coming to Canada, the rules are very, very stringent and they have credits for things like education and language skills and age, you're probably precluding the very people who may want to move to a rural area through those rules because they're more apt to be people from large centers who have access to education. So it actually is counter to maybe trying to attract people who want to come here and certainly—so you may want to look at whether or not those types of policies in fact, want to encourage immigration to rural areas or people have had rural experiences.

So that's all I'll say and I'll be open for questions.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Thank you very much, Leo. Appreciate the presentation, very informative. Can I understand that perhaps you'll leave a presentation with the clerk.

**Leo Cheverie:** I will leave a finished copy with Marian. I just have to finalize one aspect of it and I'll leave a copy for the committee.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Okay, very good. Because I've read—from what I can understand, you seem to have skipped through it fairly fast and I have a feeling that maybe there's more information in there.

**Leo Cheverie:** I skipped over some parts.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Okay, very good. I realize that some people do want to participate in the CBC function of sorts here. However, if there are questions for Mr. Cheverie, please feel free to bring them forward at this point. Philip.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** I did appreciate your presentation, Leo. You identified a lot of the challenges in the program but from a labour perspective, some of what I see is within the labour movement, there's a closed shop to mobility and this is part of the problem. When you look at—if you look at the way that people get into the Public Service, for example, it's rather difficult for an immigrant to come here.

A former presenter talked about well, you're taking jobs from away or from Islanders and this type of thing. Is there a changing in thinking within and the profession of go by extension, you mentioned doctors and nurses, I mean, they too, are very protective of their turf and there's not an acceptance of other people to participate in their sector of the economy and we talk about to try and get the professionals into this and like—we've all got to work at this together, I think.

**Leo Cheverie:** I agree. I think what's happening is they are changing because I think people are going to realize that demographics not only on PEI but across the country are changing and in actual fact, our workforce is going to shrink unless there's that great amount of immigration and a way to integrate them into our economy. I think on a national level, I'll tell you what CUPE it's doing as well—they're actually having very proactive policies on a national level to make sure that people who are working for CUPE as well as organizing, that they are organizing in areas where there are, where immigration is highest so in actual fact, if there's a large Filipino population, for example, then they should be hiring people who are Filipino and organizing as staff for them as well as organizing in those communities.

There's also, they've signed partnership agreements in Western Canada which is a very large aboriginal communities. There was a very high unemployment rate and saying as in school boards and hospitals and all those places where CUPE is represented, then the workers in those areas should reflect the population as a whole. So if there are 15 per cent of aboriginal people, for

example, in rural Saskatchewan, then 15 per cent of the people who work for the school board should be aboriginal, and they want to work with those communities and develop those things.

So I think those are the types of models that we need to work at. It does take a lot of filter down to the very lowest level but it also, it does—I'm on CUPE's national committee which deals with anti-racism work and it is—there are people from across the country sit there who deal with basically the issues around workers of color and aboriginal workers across Canada and one issue they have is trying to make sure that the larger institutions try to reflect the workforce as a whole but also making sure that we're able to look at having anti-racism education for our members or doing things in workplaces so in actual fact, we are changing people's attitudes and approaches because the subtle forms of racism, I think, came out of fear or came out of exclusion of not us—that these people are like us, sort of thing. Whereas when you have a greater amount of education, there's a greater ability to try to have greater integration and have people connect.

Certainly on PEI, we have had a greater success in having people sponsor refugee families and have people come here because the whole community has come around to support that particular group of people and we've had people work on (Indistinct) and we probably had the highest percentage of people of any province probably who've gone overseas. I think PEI probably has the highest percentage of people who have gone to work with CUSO or whatever.

So I think we need to look at our strengths and we already have a reputation of being a very welcoming place, of trying to building on those things but also making sure that people see the opportunity and rather than seeing what they perceive as a threat, but I think part of it is when people are seeing younger people leaving the province or even older people to find work elsewhere or say, well I'm going down the road because employment in Alberta or the construction trades, they're going to be paying a lot more. I can pay off my bills or I can do this and that and people leaving all the time, it does make people have the mentality that if we're attracting people to come here, they're taking those jobs. What we really should do is try to build quality jobs here and find policies and programs that can retain people here

but also attract more people.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Okay, with that, Leo, thank you very much for coming forward.

**Leo Cheverie:** Thank you.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Appreciate the information that you've brought to our committee and I'm sure that you'll be following the outcome of this legislative committee and again, thank you very much.

**Leo Cheverie:** Before I go, I want to thank the committee itself. I also want to thank Marian because she's been exceedingly patient with me because of some scheduling problems I've had and other people from CUPE or who have been out of the province recently so it's been hard to arrange this by Marian. We're very happy to have had the opportunity and I thank her for her patience.

**Honourable Philip Brown (PC):** We all have to thank Marian.

**Leo Cheverie:** Yes.

**Wilfred Arsenault (PC) (Chair):** Thank you very much, Leo. Okay, now we'll get into an In Camera session.