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# Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, June 9, 2016**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj**



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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order. Pursuant to the order of reference received May 10, 2016 and Standing Order 108(2), the committee will now begin its study of the supplementary estimates (A) for 2016-17 and the 2016 immigration levels plan.

Appearing before us today is Minister McCallum, along with senior department officials.

Minister, I would like to call vote 1a under Citizenship and Immigration Canada and invite you to make your opening statement.

Minister, the floor is yours.

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think you'd agree we're making a fairly regular appearance with you which is, of course, a great pleasure.

I'm joined by a number of officials: Richard Wex, the associate deputy minister; Catrina Tapley; Tony Matson; Dawn Edlund; and David Manicom.

Together, we will try to answer your questions.

[Translation]

I'm very pleased to be here today to present Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's requests for additional expenditures under the Supplementary Estimates (A) for fiscal year 2016-17.

[English]

The expenditures set out in the supplementary estimates come to \$188.2 million.

In my remarks I will focus on some of the most significant funding items or transfers that we need to help the department meet its goals. As you will see, the items are linked largely to the refugee initiative and to my department's 2016 annual levels plan that was tabled in Parliament this spring. These are the two items on your agenda today.

Preliminary results for 2015-16 show that IRCC spent \$188.8 million. This is approximately \$110.7 million less than planned. These cost savings or deferred spending are the result of good financial management and cost-effective decisions. Several factors lay behind the government's coming in under budget: lower than anticipated costs for transportation and overseas processing; unused contingency funds; and finally, the decision not to use interim

refugee lodging sites. Those were largely the military bases that could have been called upon to use but were not needed.

Under supplementary estimates (A), we are requesting a funding increase of \$39.4 million under operating expenditures in the effort to resettle additional government-sponsored Syrian refugees. This will enable us to meet our commitment to resettle 25,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.

[Translation]

This will provide for 51 full-time staff to be used in processing of permanent resident applications overseas. The funding will help pay for our partners' support in facilitating processing, as well as for commercial flights to transport refugees to this country from overseas, as well as pre-departure services. The money will also pay for department staff to help manage settlement programs, helping resettle Syrian refugees at their final destinations.

[English]

Resettlement funding increases of \$99.6 million under grants and contributions will also go toward activities including refugee income support to help them start their new lives here, and funding for third parties to support overseas pre-departure services. This also includes funding to help integrate Syrian refugees into Canadian communities by providing settlement services such as employment and language training.

These estimates also contain another item related to refugees. In order to intervene in refugee applications or appeals where there are concerns about fraud, credibility, or system integrity, these estimates seek to continue with the ministerial reviews and intervention pilot project. This request for an increase of \$5 million under operating expenditures would carry the project for one more year, pending a review of the pilot's results and taking a decision on whether to make this pilot permanent.

[Translation]

The request continues funding for some 63 full-time equivalents. This would include staff in three reviews and interventions offices who would review both refugee claims and decisions on the basis of integrity and credibility.

Funding would also provide for staff at the department's national headquarters to provide performance measurement, quality assurance and functional guidance.

[English]

Let me now turn to the 2016 levels plan, which I understand will be the focus of the second hour of this meeting.

As I said in a previous appearance before you, the government is committed to a strong, generous, and welcoming country through the immigration system. We strive to open Canada's doors to those who want to contribute to our prosperity and diverse culture,

The recent levels plan called for Canada to welcome 300,000 new permanent resident immigrants in 2016. That's the point target. The range is 280,000 to 305,000, which is the highest number of projected immigrant admissions since World War I. More families will be reunited under this plan. Family class admissions are expected to increase to between 75,000 and 82,000. Refugee admissions will be between 41,000 and 46,000, almost quadruple the range for 2015.

• (1110)

[Translation]

At the same time, we haven't lost sight of the fact that immigration is critical to Canada's economic future. That's why economic immigration programs will continue to account for the majority of all immigration admissions.

As I say that, I must also note that the numbers in the economic class include family members of principal applicants, and that immigrants in all classes, including refugees and reunited family members, make meaningful contributions to our economy and to our communities.

[English]

In other words, all immigrants are, to one degree or another, economic immigrants. I'm pleased that we are on track to meet our processing targets this year.

Consistent with the priorities identified in my mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the levels plan calls for the reduction in backlogs and an improvement in processing times in multiple programs, especially family class. Under these supplementary estimates, an adjustment to operating expenditures requires a \$20.9-million increase to reduce application processing times and achieve higher immigration admissions. This is in keeping with an objective set out in the 2016 immigration levels plan.

The funding would provide for 191 full-time equivalents. It would support many activities, such as reducing existing family class inventories, increasing family class intake, and streamlining our processing.

Under grants and contributions is an increase of \$18.1 million, also dedicated to this year's levels, which would go toward settlement services such as language training, employment bridging, and facilitating access to settlement services.

Integration of immigrants is key, so my department will use the money for settlement services, such as language learning for newcomers and support services that bridge new immigrants' arrivals in their communities and in places of employment.

Looking forward, this summer we will be engaging with Canadians on the topic of immigration. Our consultations will help feed the policies that determine how many immigrants come to Canada and what their backgrounds might be. Of course, what we hear will be reflected in the next levels plan, which by the way will not be for just one additional year but for three additional years.

[Translation]

As I indicated earlier, these are just some of the highlights of the adjustments under Supplementary Estimates (A). Our government's vision to attract more newcomers to this country can be understood through the 2016 levels plan. It is reflected in these Supplementary Estimates request. We want to be clear that we are making family reunification a core priority.

[English]

We see immigration as a key to economic and social success. At the same time, we want to ensure Canada does not neglect its international standing as a beacon for refugees fleeing persecution.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will stop. My officials and I will be very happy to answer your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister, for those introductory remarks.

Mr. Chen, for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister and staff, for attending today's meeting.

I first want to applaud the incredible work that's being done in the department, particularly around Syrian refugee resettlement.

In our previous meetings where we've heard from witnesses on the topic of the selection of government-assisted refugees, there have been questions around whether the government should go beyond the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in terms of selection for those government-assisted refugees, on the basis that there are many vulnerable populations around the world.

Minister, can you share what factors the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would look at? What factors would be considered in their work to select the most vulnerable?

• (1115)

**Hon. John McCallum:** We have great faith in the United Nations to provide us the best possible information on who are, indeed, the most vulnerable refugees. We have relied on the United Nations to select those people according to their criteria, with which we agree. In particular, refugees are considered on grounds of need irrespective of religion or other such factors.

I'll ask Dawn Edlund or David Manicom to describe in more detail, with more precision, the criteria used by the United Nations.

**Mr. David Manicom (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees works closely with all resettlement countries from around the world, including the large resettlement countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and others, for each population to develop indicators of vulnerability.

The indicators of vulnerability are based not only on the reason they fled their country, but also on whether they are vulnerable in their country of first asylum, whether they have necessary supports, whether they have family members to help them, or whether they are single women dealing with extreme vulnerability inside a refugee camp.

The indicators of vulnerability vary from population to population. Sometimes they are very individual and cannot be defined as groups, but they include things such as being a member of a religious minority, persecution due to sexual orientation, and vulnerability to violence in the place where they are now.

When the United Nations interviews refugees, they take note of all of these factors, and then from among the tragic situation in the country of first asylum, look at whether the individual should be a priority for resettlement to another country.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** Thank you.

Under the supplementary estimates, we see there will be an additional 10,000 Syrian GARs in 2016. As part of that, there is an increase of \$99.6 million for resettlement funding. This money will go toward supporting refugee communities, to help them start their lives and to provide them services, such as employment and language training programs.

We've also heard from organizations that their funding, for example for LINC programs, has been decreased. Common sense would dictate that simply because one particular organization has a lower funding for a particular year, it doesn't mean that overall funding hasn't increased.

Could you explain why certain organizations might receive less funding in a particular year while other organizations receive more funding to support programs like LINC?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Yes.

I think we are doing the right thing in terms of the three-year moving average formula. It was introduced by the previous government, I believe. This is one of the items from the previous government with which we agree, and that is that the money should basically go to where the immigrants are going. The amount of money any province receives is proportional to the number of immigrants that province receives, as calculated by a three-year moving average. If one province gets more than it used to, it will get more money. If it gets fewer than it used to, it will get less money. That is the division of a pie of a given size, if you wish.

In addition, there have been substantial increases in the amount of money, notably for language training, but also for other aspects of

settlement. I think Dawn Edlund has information on language training in British Columbia she can share with you.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Certainly, Minister.

Mr. Chair, British Columbia was one of the provinces using the three-year rolling average where the amount of allocation dropped. That meant that service provider organizations generally for all settlement services had a cut of between 1% and 8%. When we had the large amounts of money specifically for Syrian refugees, we targeted that money not under that settlement funding formula, but to where the Syrian refugees were actually settling and being permanently housed.

Our staff across the country have been working closely with the service provider organizations to identify the needs of the refugee population, in particular, and identifying funding priorities. As funding amounts of money have been approved, that money has been pushed out the door to meet those needs.

For example, in British Columbia, at the end of fiscal year 2015-16 for the Syrian refugee arrivals, and for the full year of 2016-17, there's been an increase of funding for language training of \$3.28 million. That's allowed the creation of 69 language classes and about 1,242 seats for the Syrian refugees who were there. That's actually been targeted at the specific communities where we know that Syrians have resettled and also where there were wait lists.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** What types of services are available after 12 months for GARs?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I think the 15 seconds are gone, but after 12 months, the income support ends but the other supports for language training in other areas continue.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Ms. Rempel, you have seven minutes, please.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Matson, earlier this week, the minister told the House of Commons that the government had "funded \$600 million for settlement in 2016-17. That is \$27 million extra for the new refugees". Are those figures correct?

**Mr. Tony Matson (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** My understanding is that those figures are correct.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** By my calculation, that would be roughly about \$773 million from last year. The \$27 million would be roughly a 4% increase in additional funding for settlement. Would that be correct?

**Mr. Tony Matson:** Yes, I believe that would be correct, but I will turn that over to Catrina Tapley.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Program Policy, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Mr. Chair, for us, 2016-17 is a pretty special year in terms of settlement funding. Maybe I can explain it in terms of three components.

We have a base amount for settlement funding of about \$588 million. This is the money we spend on settlement funding outside the province of Quebec. For 2016-17 we have two top-ups, if you like, to that money. One is \$38.6 million in supplementary funding that has been provided for Syria that is being distributed as well. On top of that are the funds from the federal budget, the \$54.3 million over five years. For 2016-17, that's roughly about \$19.3 million.

Also, if I may, Mr. Chair, what you see in the supplementary estimates is a possible additional amount of \$9.3 million which is some unused contingency funding for settlement.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** In total, would the additional amounts for settlement this year be roughly about \$90 million to \$100 million, if I'm doing the math in my head correctly?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** In terms of what's available outside the province of Quebec, I would say it's roughly about \$640 million, but that includes funds we also spend on pre-arrival services overseas.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Sure.

By my math, then, and what we've just talked about, that would be about a 16% increase for funding for settlement services. Yet, the minister's notes here say that you're looking at a 400% increase in bringing refugees to Canada.

Do you think the funding that's been budgeted here is going to be adequate, given that there's a 400% increase in refugees coming in and we're seeing a 16% increase in funding for refugee services? Do you feel that's perhaps a bit off?

**Mr. Richard Wex (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Citizenship and Immigration):** Mr. Chair, maybe I could just add to my colleague's comments.

In terms of the member's question, it's a very welcome point that settlement and integration is frankly the most difficult aspect of this national project, and the needs of this group, and particularly the government-assisted refugees, do have a certain socio-demographic profile that is of higher needs.

In terms of the injection of funds, to speak to the member's questions, there has been a significant injection of funds in terms of recent budgets associated with this 25,000 welcome refugees initiative. Of the \$678 million for the 25,000, there will be \$150 million over three years to increase settlement.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you. You didn't answer my question, and I'm running out of time.

The minister introduced in his speaking points the issue of military housing, the fact that there had been cost savings realized due to the fact that these facilities weren't used. Because the minister introduced that, could you please provide the committee with the total amount spent across government departments on retrofitting or improving military housing that wasn't used as part of the Syrian refugee initiative?

• (1125)

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** I have the amount that was saved in relation, so I have to do the math to figure out what the amount spent was. I believe, through a parliamentary question, the Department of National Defence answered this question and talked about money spent for retrofitting the military bases. It was already in their planned spending. They were already going to do that retrofitting anyway, and so that amount of money was already set aside for them to do that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The extra funds—

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** In the answer to the parliamentary question, they answered that the extra amount of money they put forward was \$2.35 million, if memory serves.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Were there any extra funds above and beyond that amount that were used to retrofit military houses specifically for this? If that funding was allocated, it would have come out of the Department of National Defence budget, and so that \$2.5 million was essentially wasted because the housing wasn't used. Correct?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** It was \$2.35 million, and those retrofits still are in place and would be to the benefit of the people who are residing in that housing.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Who would be residing in that housing right now if it was retrofitted for refugees? Are there plans to use that housing for refugees in the future?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** There's no plan to use that housing for refugees in the future. It was housing that was already on the bases, and then we set it up in terms of being welcoming for the refugee population as our backup plan in case we needed it.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Somebody is likely to live in those houses and we'll derive some benefit from the retrofits, but the main point is that we saved a lot of money because we did not have to use the military bases for refugees.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Perhaps one of the officials can provide information on this question. Many members of the government have raised the issue of waiving the immigration loans program for all refugees in Canada. Could you provide the committee with a cost estimate, should that proceed, of the total cost of waiving the immigration loans programs for all refugees?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes, we could provide the committee with that information.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** What is it?

**Mr. David Manicom:** I don't have that figure in front of me right now. It's several tens of millions of dollars, but we would want to provide the exact number.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

The last time officials were in front of the committee, there wasn't a system in place on tracking employment rates of Syrian refugees. Has that been rectified and, if so, what are the cost estimates to the government in terms of Syrian refugees requiring social assistance due to a lack of employment?

**The Chair:** Twenty seconds, please.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** Mr. Chair, I don't have cost estimates in terms of Syrian refugees on social assistance. Income support is provided for government-assisted refugees for the first 12 months, as you are aware.

In terms of how we will track those moving to employment, we are standing up a component in something called our immigration contribution agreement reporting environment, or iCARE, and that will be available later this year as a proxy. This is where we work through service provider organizations.

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

Ms. Kwan, for seven minutes, please.

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

On the funding for language training, there was some breakdown for British Columbia. I wonder whether or not I could get the detailed information on the organizations and the communities that received the language training in British Columbia.

Aside from British Columbia, from our committee's witnesses we heard from folks from OCASI, people from COSTI in Toronto, folks from the Catholic Crosscultural Services, MOSAIC from B.C., and the YMCA from Cambridge and Kitchener, who actually highlighted the fact that they also received funding cuts as well, and that would be for their normal resettlement services.

Then, as well, even though in some cases—not all of them—they may not have had a funding cut this year, they didn't get an increase in funding either when their workload has increased significantly. In the case of Catholic Crosscultural Services, for example, they actually stated that 437 Syrian refugees turned up at their doors. Their funding did not go up; they have had a funding cut.

I know that we won't be able to get into all the detailed numbers, but I wonder if the minister could provide the committee with a detailed breakdown from community to community what that funding stream is for regular resettlement services, what the new injection of the money is for the Syrian initiative, what they were targeted for, and what organizations received that funding.

Then we can have a clear understanding of what's going on. Right now what the minister is saying and what the officials have provided don't match with the reality of what's going on in the community.

• (1130)

**Hon. John McCallum:** I think we tried to be clear that in terms of the overall funding, some got cuts, some got increases, because of the changing distribution of immigrants over the previous three years. On top of that, substantial additional funds were provided to accommodate the Syrian refugees, with the amounts depending on where the refugees were going to.

In terms of your detailed questions, perhaps one of the officials could say whether we can get that information you want.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Mr. Chair, we'll be able to provide that information.

If I could just take a couple of seconds, what I was trying to say earlier, we will provide that information to the clerk of the committee as appropriate, Mr. Chair, but of the \$678 million, to the minister's point, there will be an injection of \$150 million over three years, but through these supplementary estimates (A)—which is what we're here today to talk about in part—we're seeking an additional \$9.3 million that will help directly these service organizations to get to the very issues that the member is properly raising.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** If I may—

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

I've actually stopped the clock so that response doesn't come out of your time. Let's proceed.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Thank you. I don't mean to be rude, it's just that I only have seven minutes.

With that, Mr. Chair, and to the minister and his staff, could we actually get the detailed breakdown then for both the regular budget as well as from the supplementary estimates, the increased dollars that are being asked for. A clear breakdown of that would assist us a lot.

On the question around cessation, actually, I just want to touch on this for a minute. This is a different realm.

I wonder whether or not the minister can provide us with this information. How many individuals has the IRCC set a quota on bringing cessation against for the 2016-17 fiscal year? How many staff members are involved on the cessation files? Since the passing of Bill C-31, how many individuals have had the cessation process brought against them? Since the passing of Bill C-31 how many individuals have been deported? Of those deported, how many were deported on the basis that it is retroactive? That is, how many individuals have been deported for engagement in an act and had the cessation process brought against them before it was even brought in as legislation? How many cessation cases are currently on hold? How many cessation cases are currently before the courts and in which provinces? Last, will there be further action that would be undertaken by the government to address this policy?

**Hon. John McCallum:** My strong impression is that all of those are CBSA issues.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** With the exception that the targets actually come from IRCC. CBSA carry out that work, but I believe that the information actually comes from IRCC.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I will ask one of my officials to comment on that.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Perhaps I could suggest this while the staff are wondering about this. We could get the information back to the committee in written format, and I would welcome that as well, and for these questions to be answered. If the minister could commit to providing that, I would appreciate it.

Then I could move on to my next set of questions.

**Hon. John McCallum:** We can provide information to the extent that it's from my department. I'm not sure if I'm entitled to commit to provide CBSA information. To the extent that it's from the immigration department, yes.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Okay, thank you. I would appreciate that. Perhaps there might be some moments when the minister can work across ministries with CBSA to communicate with each other to endeavour to get the information that may or may not be able to take place. I think governments often work in silos, but maybe we could break those silos down.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Actually, we work incredibly closely with CBSA.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Fantastic. Then I will look forward to receiving all of that information across ministries from the minister then.

On the issue around backlogs, let me get into this as well. According to the written response from the department dated March 10 for budget 2016, which proposes \$25 million in the 2016-17 fiscal year to target specific backlogs in Canada and overseas and to reduce the processing times on sponsorships, I wonder if the minister could provide us with what specific backlogs are being targeted. How many applications have been and will be processed as a result of this increased funding? Which sponsorship categories does each application belong to? How old are the applications being targeted? In particular, with inland spousal sponsorships, there are issues that have been continuously brought forward. One is that in fact with the backlog the government is actually jumping the queue on different timelines of when they are processing the applications. I wonder if the minister can provide answers to that, if not today, then in written form.

• (1135)

**Hon. John McCallum:** I don't have all those detailed numbers in my head. I can tell you that the dollars from the budget are specifically directed to reducing those backlogs, and that's also reflected in the substantial increase in levels space for spouses. I wonder if we could—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but the time is up, Minister. We're over time at this point. Perhaps in the next round of questioning.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Do we have a commitment on the written response for my question?

**The Chair:** I believe we have a commitment. We do have a commitment from the department to provide the information that has been requested.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I don't know, you've cut me off before I could answer.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Yes, we have the information. If we can speak it now, great. If not, then we'll do it later.

**The Chair:** There will be another round where perhaps you may.

Mr. Sarai, for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Good morning, Minister. I want to thank you for being with us this morning.

I want to ask you one of the most popular questions that I get in my riding of Surry Centre, and that is, how is our government going

to address the processing times? I know it's something that you are passionate about addressing, and you've mentioned it each and every time you've come to this committee. In fairness to the previous Conservative government, this is something they pretended to champion, but in these estimates, it states that approximately \$39 million will be going toward reducing application processing times.

Can you tell us how you will achieve that goal while having high admission levels for permanent residents? I'm wondering if you could tell the committee how your department will differ from governments in the past in addressing the problems of processing times.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I'm not sure what the previous government said, but I know what they did. What we saw was processing times going through the roof over the last 10 years, particularly for the family class. One of our essential election platform commitments was to bring those down, which we are doing, and we are working every day to achieve that, but as I may have said before, one doesn't turn a battleship on a dime.

Whereas one can change provisions of the Citizenship Act through a simple act of Parliament, it takes time to hire the people to devise new methods to bring those waiting times down. I can tell you we have taken a number of concrete measures already, but there is a lot more still to be done. In particular, one of the more important things we've done is a 25% increase in the levels for spouses, partners, and children. In 2015, the levels space was 48,000, and in 2016 it was 60,000, which means 25% more coming in this year than last year. That is supplemented by the additional funding that has been mentioned, which will allow us to hire more public servants to do more processing.

We are learning from the experience in Syria. My department learned how to do things faster. We are hoping—we are not just hoping, we are in the process of importing those speedier techniques that were learned on dealing with refugees into the family stream. We've already acted on a higher number of levels, already acted on more money, and we are in the process of importing the quicker techniques that we applied to Syria into the family stream and other streams of immigrants.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Would you be able to elaborate on how many you're hiring to reduce processing times?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I don't have such a number, but perhaps my colleagues do.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** With respect to the family class of spouses, partners, and children, we're moving from 48,000 to 60,000. I'll check the numbers here, but I understand there are 191 additional FTEs for the fiscal year that will be retained to deal with the increase in levels, Mr. Chair, and at the same time attack the inventory. Those two things in combination will significantly have an impact on the overall processing times for that class.

• (1140)

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Could you give an idea of how many compared to how many there were before?



**Mr. Richard Wex:** I believe there's an inventory right now, subject to being corrected by other officials, of about 80,000.

**Hon. John McCallum:** FTEs.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** There are 450 FTEs at the moment, according to the 2016-17 report on plans and priorities that will be dedicated to this business line. It's the force power for this fiscal year to deal with the very issue the minister has commented on.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Minister, can you tell us for language training stated in the supplementary estimates, how that will be allotted going forward? I think you elaborated a little on the percentages, but will it be allotted, or based on a necessity in the area? How do you figure out which areas have more refugees after the 13th month?

**Hon. John McCallum:** As my colleague Dawn Edlund explained, those additional funds are allocated according to where the language training is needed most and where there have been waiting times to get in. Perhaps she could elaborate further.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** There are a couple of different ways. There's the settlement pot of money itself that Ms. Tapley spoke to. It's allotted based on that three-year rolling average. As to the language dollars spent, I believe in 2015 about 37% of the overall pot of money across Canada was spent on language training. Part of that is doing a needs assessment, what the language training needs of this particular population are in a particular location, and then matching the training to correspond with that.

We're doing the same thing with the extra money for the Syrians, although we're moving it more to the communities where the Syrians are.

What we're finding, through the language assessments for the Syrians, is that they have not many language skills in either English or French and are relatively low-skilled. There are special types of classes for people who are illiterate in their own language, called a literacy type of training. Then there are other levels of training corresponding to the Canadian language benchmarks, levels 1 through 4. We're finding that the majority of the Syrian populations correspond either to that illiteracy level or to the language groups 1 through 4.

Then the training is devised around helping them at the level where they are.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** In addition, we heard from a witness who had been in Canada for over 13 months and had been waiting for eight months prior to this new government's coming into power. He complained that he still hasn't received ESL.

Can you tell us, were these long wait-lists for ESL or French language inherited by this government from the previous government?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I don't know.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** I'm not sure of the answer to that, although we've opened a module in the system that my colleague referred to, iCARE, whereby we can start systematically tracking wait-lists and the number of people on them. We've set out guidelines such that people shouldn't be on more than two wait-lists at a time.

When we looked at the situation in British Columbia, there were just under 8,000 people purportedly on a wait-list, but the names of some of those people had been on that wait-list since 2010. Are they still on a wait-list? There's been no checking back to make sure that, once they got into a class, they're taken off the wait-list.

We're hoping to get better information around the whole wait-list situation for all our newcomers, through this new module and iCARE, in the coming months.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** What were the wait-lists prior to this government's coming into place?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, the time is up. Perhaps in the next round we could follow up on that.

Mr. Saroya, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister and officials, for coming. My first question is for the officials.

How much money has been spent on housing Syrian refugees at hotels since November 4, 2015?

**Mr. Tony Matson:** I'll have to get back to you with the specific figure on how much was specifically spent on housing.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** The minister announced another 10,000 GARs coming soon. What is the total projected cost for the hotel rooms for these additional 10,000 refugees coming? Are there any projected costs for it?

**Mr. Tony Matson:** I'll have to get back to you with that specific number.

• (1145)

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** Minister, it says here that IRCC spent \$188 million and had savings of \$110.7 million. How did this happen? It's almost a 40% saving. Either the budget was not done carefully and properly, or something was cut drastically to save 40% in money from the budget.

**Hon. John McCallum:** The reason we spent dramatically less than we said we would is that we were dramatically efficient.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** Forty per cent?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I gave the reasons in my speech, and there were three. There were lower than anticipated costs for transportation and overseas processing. The costs of the transport and processing were lower than had been projected. There were some contingency funds that were unused. Contingency funds are put there just in case things go wrong, but they didn't, and so we didn't have to spend them. Then there was the decision, which was discussed earlier, not to use the interim refugee lodging sites. Those are three reasons why the costs came in significantly lower than had been projected.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** I understand, but 40% is hard to believe, especially when it comes to government funding.

There are another 10,000 refugees coming. You say that you need \$39.4 million under operating expenditures for another 10,000 refugees.

Are there any other costs you expect, any hidden costs that should be added to this, which are not included in the \$39.4 million?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Look, first of all, you're saying how surprising it is we save so much money, but you should be—

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** It's hard to believe 40%.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I think you should be happy.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** I am happy, but—

**Hon. John McCallum:** Conservatives usually like to save money and we saved a lot.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** I am happy.

**Hon. John McCallum:** In terms of your question on the \$39.4 million, there are two parts of the money for the 10,000 additional government-assisted refugees. The part you identified is \$39.4 million to identify and process them, but then there's the larger component of almost \$100 million—\$99.6 million—which is to provide income support and other supports once they get here. The total cost, if you add up the two parts, is \$139 million.

My colleague has something to add.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** In that \$99.6 million, there's \$31.6 million tagged for reception and hotels, to provide initial accommodations for Syrian refugees, to address a question that was just asked.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Mr. Chair, with respect to the \$110 million that was not spent, 40% of that was the contingency. The minister mentioned contingency, but 40% of the money that wasn't spent was associated with that.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** Is that \$99.6 million a realistic budget for 10,000 people? We don't want to go through what we heard from the previous witnesses, people waiting for 13 or 15 months.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Maybe if we're as efficient as we have been, which you found hard to believe, we might end up saving and not spending all of that money. However, that is the amount we think will be required to support the new government-assisted refugees.

**Mr. Bob Saroya:** Minister, with all due respect, I'd rather spend the \$99.6 million and not have people wait 13 months for ESL classes. As you know, if there are no ESL classes, there are no jobs.

**The Chair:** Mr. Saroya, unfortunately, your time is up.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I agree with you. That's why we put additional money in for the ESL.

**The Chair:** Mr. Tabbara, for five minutes.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister and staff, for being here today.

I want to talk about the generosity of the Canadian government and the Canadian people of bringing in so many Syrian refugees in a short amount of time. It really rings true to Canada's return to its humanitarian traditions.

This is shown not only by the unprecedented resettlement of thousands of some of the most vulnerable members of our global

community in a very short period of time, but also by the reinstatement of various programs cancelled by the previous government.

The interim health program was fully restored on April 1, 2016, after it was cut in 2012, leaving already vulnerable newcomers, particularly women and children, without access to basic medical care.

Can you elaborate on the various significant changes to programs aimed at refugees that have occurred in the last few months?

● (1150)

**Hon. John McCallum:** Thank you for that very good question.

You're right, in that we have changed things in a significant way since coming to power. Perhaps the single statistic that tells the story is to look at resettled refugees. For 2015, 13,800 was the target, and for 2016 it's 44,800. That's more than triple the number of refugees that we're admitting this year compared with the last year of the previous government. That's a big change.

You mentioned refugee health care. I think that is also important. Those of us who were in Parliament in the old days will remember when that decision came down that a judge declared the policy of denying basic health care to refugees was cruel and unusual and therefore unconstitutional. Yet the previous government continued to delay in implementing the orders of the court. In some sense we had no choice because the court had ordered it, but it was something we had committed to do anyway. We think the decent thing to do is to provide basic health care. We weren't the only ones who said that. The court agreed, too.

You ask what we've done. Well, another thing we did—I'm at the end of my list; I think three is enough—has to do with the Citizenship Act, which is now going through Parliament. I think it will be through the House quite soon, and then on to the Senate. We have made a basic change in terms of saying the government will no longer be able to revoke people's citizenship for certain criminal acts, because we believe all Canadians are equal and there's only one class of citizen.

Those are some of the things we have done since November.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I know in my region the medical community has been applauding that change, and I thank you for that, Minister.

The previous government's budget bill restricted refugee access to social assistance. How will the 2016-17 supplementary estimates affect the ease of integration of Syrian refugees, including language training, housing, physical and mental health, and other fundamental important factors required for their integration into Canadian society?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I'm not aware that the previous government restricted access to social assistance. Perhaps...no?

Seemingly the additional funding that we are providing will help to resettle the refugees, teach them languages, help them get jobs, and hopefully minimize the need for people to go on social assistance. But anyone who is a Canadian permanent resident does have the right to go on social assistance, and that happens both to refugees and to others. Through our settlement funding, we are hoping to equip the refugees so that they will find jobs and not need to do that.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Thirty seconds, I guess that's all.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Shipley, I understand that you'll be splitting your time with Ms. Rempel, so you have two and a half minutes.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's good to see you back.

Minister, thank you for coming.

I'm not on this committee, but I am quite astounded at some of the things I'm hearing. Minister, all these announcements that come out, it would appear in terms of what I've been able to understand in the last three quarters of an hour is that there's been absolutely no idea on the costing and no analysis in terms of outcome. What I'm seeing is that you've been able to build in, as was in the government's budget, some exorbitant contingency funds so that when things don't work out, it makes it look like you have saved substantial amounts of dollars.

These are all significant issues. When asked about waiving the immigration loans program, you were not able to give an answer. There are the military bases that were converted out of somebody's budget, DND's likely. The people who were going there are not going there. I don't know if those buildings are sitting empty now waiting in case there is a change in immigration, but again, no costs were given today about it. On the cost to renovate the hotels, and there were great announcements about the renovations, there are no guidelines in terms of the costs. What is the cost of the new additional social assistance that is now being allocated to the refugee program, sir?

• (1155)

**Hon. John McCallum:** You say you're not on the committee, but some of your questions don't seem to hit the mark.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** In fact, they're all very relevant, Minister, because they're all related to immigration.

**Hon. John McCallum:** I don't think specific money has been allocated for social assistance. Social assistance is provincial. If people need to go on social assistance, the province will pay.

I guess a general response to your point, and perhaps my colleague Richard Wex can deal with it more specifically, is that it's hard for the Liberals to win because of the way the Conservatives pose their questions. Usually you say that we're big spenders and that we spend too much. Now we come in substantially under budget and you complain about that, too. I'm not quite sure what we're supposed to do on spending to get your approval. According to the Conservatives, we spend too much but when we spend less, they criticize us for spending too little. Perhaps we can't win, although in the last election most Canadians seemed to think we were okay.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I'll turn it over to my colleague.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We just want you to have a plan, Minister, with respect.

**Hon. John McCallum:** We do have a plan.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I'm going to jump in here and look at the 400%—

**Hon. John McCallum:** What about Richard Wex?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I'll take the time now.

There's a 400% increase in refugees year over year. I'm wondering, with regard to the immigration levels report, if the cost impact on the municipal and principal governments, given this 400% increase, was calculated. I'm also wondering if there were any consultations with provincial and municipal governments on providing social services to refugees related to a 400% increase in refugees. This would be for school boards dealing with refugees, mental health services, etc.

I'm directing this question to the officials.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I'll start and then turn it over to my colleagues.

To the question of whether there were consultations with the provinces in the development of the levels plan, there was consultation at the officials level as well as with the minister. There were various face-to-face meetings and phone calls with the officials through their regular channels.

Obviously, there are downstream effects. That's a very fair point the member is making about the real downstream effects of settlement and integration of this population. It's a national project. This government has put in \$678 million over six years for the 25,000 initiative. We're reporting on that. We're trying to report on the expenditures and the plans over the six years, which we're happy to do, if we could come back to that. As I said, significant funds have been put in place, including with respect to settlement. Given that this is a national project, we're all in this together, and we continue to consult with other stakeholders and other levels of government.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** You said there was a real downstream impact on provincial and municipal governments. Has the department conducted a cost estimate on the downstream impact of refugee settlement services?

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Certainly, including in the supplementary estimates (A) where we're seeking another \$18.3 million, it's all part of the increase we're seeking to deal with the very real issues of settlement and integration.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** The department, then, is saying—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but the time is up.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** —that the downstream impact is \$18 million.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I did not say that. No.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** We'll come back.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Chen, I understand you'll be splitting your time with Mr. Tabbara.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** Mr. Chair, actually, Mr. Tabbara will have this time.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I want to go back to what we talked about, the \$39 million in extra funding for reducing the processing times. Minister, could you elaborate on how, going forward, this funding will help in our four-year term to reduce processing times in the long run?

**Hon. John McCallum:** There are basically two ways to reduce processing times. One is to hire more people to do the processing. The second way is to do the processing more efficiently so that you need fewer people to do it. We're working on both fronts.

We achieved a budget increase, which is now reflected in the estimates. It will allow us to hire more officials, which will allow them to interview more people and deal with more cases. That is one of the ways we will reduce the processing times and the backlogs. The second way we will do that is to learn how to do things more efficiently. That's what we did during the Syrian crisis, the Syrian refugee experience. Officials learned to do things a whole lot faster than had previously been the case. We're hoping to import the lessons learned from the refugee experience in order to make it quicker to bring in families and economic immigrants.

It's a combination of more employees through receiving more money, as you see in front of you, and more efficiency so that a given number of employees can get more processing done.

• (1200)

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** This is not just with refugees, but all aspects of immigration. Is that correct?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Yes. What I'm saying is that when we did the refugees, that was a sort of case study, if you like, or pilot project for learning to be more efficient. If the people who work in my department have learned how to be more efficient in processing refugees, then they can take the lessons learned from over there and apply those same principles to processing other groups of people. They all have family members, economic immigrants, and any kind of immigrant.

The plan is to draw on the lessons learned, and they're working actively on this. They have what they call tiger teams set up, groups of active public servants coming together to talk about what we learned from the Syrian experience, how we can apply the lessons learned over there to family class, to economic immigrants, to whatever. People within the department are actively discussing that and putting into place what they have learned.

Yes, we will learn from the achievements we had with the refugees and use that new knowledge to improve performance elsewhere.

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** I'll be splitting my time with Mr. Sarai, if there's time.

**The Chair:** Perhaps, Minister, since we have a little bit of time and in the spirit of greater transparency, in the immigration levels plan that you've provided, you provide numbers by categories. Would it be possible to receive an approximate regional and/or country-by-country breakdown for each category from the department?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I know we publish information on immigration by country of origin. I'm not quite sure about region, but I will ask one of the officials to deal with that.

**Mr. David Manicom:** We can provide historical information both on which provinces immigrants arrive in and which country they came from. Our levels plan is not based on nationality, so we don't know how many people from which country will arrive in the levels plan this year, but that information can be provided retroactively. Canada's immigration programs are all nationality blind. They are not planned to get a certain number of people from a certain country.

**The Chair:** Is what you're saying that, for instance in the family class, there is no forethought put towards deciding that historically this is a country from which we have received a very large contingent but we are blind, in terms of our planning process, as to whether or not we'll be receiving large numbers from that country rather than from other countries?

**Mr. David Manicom:** We're certainly not blind from our planning and operational process point of view. We know historical trends and we use those trends to provide staffing and resources, but in our processing, we process cases in the order in which they are received.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, you have three minutes, please.

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

I have a number of questions.

First, how many GLBTQ GARs have been identified, have been processed, and are here in Canada?

While you're thinking about getting that answer, let me ask a question concerning tracking of wait-lists. The minister's official mentioned iCARE. When can we expect that report to be made available? Will it be made public, and can a copy of that report be submitted to this committee so that we can review it?

I want to be clear about the breakdown of the funding for resettlement. What I'm looking for is which agencies have received additional funding above and beyond the normal resettlement funding for a Syrian refugee and for the Syrian refugee initiative. How much has each organization received? How long is the additional funding to last? That is to say, is it a long-term funding stream, short-term funding or a one-time cash injection? What is the funding identified for? When were the additional funds released to the organizations?

• (1205)

**Hon. John McCallum:** Well, it seems that's almost the full three minutes just to ask the questions, so we may have to get back to you, but if any of the officials can answer part of it now, I'll turn it over to them.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** Mr. Chair, I'll come back to the question on wait-lists for language classes. In tracking this now through the system we call iCARE, we've identified particular areas: northern and southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. With regard to British Columbia, I think both Ms. Edlund and I would say that those figures are just a little off at this point as we continue to work through a better way to plan on that.

I can tell you what we're reporting as of April 30 in our system, so these numbers will have improved since then. In terms of numbers of Syrian refugees who have received language assessment, and then the number of Syrian refugees actually enrolled in IRCC-funded language training, we have an adult population here now of about 10,000. Of those, about 8,000 have received language assessments, and we have just slightly over 4,000 who are enrolled in language training as of April 30.

We're ready now to pull out the next batch of information. This is information provided in the system by service provider organizations, and I have every confidence that those numbers will increase.

**The Chair:** Ms. Kwan, the time is up.

Ms. Zahid, go ahead for seven minutes, please.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming today.

My questions will be in relation to the levels that have been announced for 2016.

The government has been criticized for reducing the levels of economic immigrants, possibly in favour of other categories such as family reunification. However, it should be noted that being separated from one's family and loved ones is a serious detriment and causes stress and a lack of support that can make life very difficult for the immigrants to integrate into Canadian society and to be contributing members of the Canadian economy.

Would it therefore not hold that family reunification actually provides a net positive economic benefit for Canada, and that it should be encouraged?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Absolutely, but we also want to encourage economic immigrants and we want to encourage refugees. The issue you're raising is that the pie is only so big, so if you have more of one thing, you have to have less of something else.

The target we have for 2016 is 300,000, and I am told that is absolutely the maximum capacity of the department. There is no way we can bring in more than 300,000.

Because we had made this large commitment to refugees, the number of refugees has almost quadrupled—it's three to four times higher than it was in 2015. The number of spouses is 25% higher, I think from 12,000 to 16,000 over that period. That demonstrates a commitment to family unification. We're also committed to strong economic immigrants, because we need to grow the economy. For that one year only, because the total capacity was limited and we had pressures on the other areas, we did have a small reduction for one year only in economic immigrants, so that's how it played out. Certainly our actions indicate that, as you suggest, family reunification is very important, and the numbers speak for themselves on that.

• (1210)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

During our study on Syrian refugees resettlement, this committee heard from some witnesses, especially the sponsorship agreement holders, regarding quotas and caps for sponsoring Syrian refugees. Some sponsorship agreement holders said that they have adequate funds and other resources to sponsor even more refugees but they are being held back due to the quotas and the caps for this year.

It is quite a great testament to the extreme generosity of Canadians, the way they are welcoming all the Syrian refugees. However, given the resources the government has available and the levels available for Syrian refugees, could you please discuss the impact that admitting more privately sponsored refugees from Syria, over and above the stated numbers, would have on other refugee admission streams with regard to numbers, as well as the processing times in all the other areas?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Yes. Well, that's a good question, and it is certainly the case that if we admit more of one, then we have to admit less of another because, as I just said, 300,000 is our absolute maximum.

We do have this issue that Canadians have been overwhelmingly generous in their response to the Syrian refugees and that's a good thing. It's so much so that we have trouble keeping up with the demand, and so we have made some adjustments to allow more Syrian refugees to come into Canada by saying that all those who applied before March 31 would be accepted by the end of this year or early next year.

That won't meet the full demand. I'm aware of that. Not everybody who wants to sponsor a Syrian refugee or indeed another refugee from another country will be able to do that as quickly as they would like to. That's because we have this constraint on our total levels. As much as I would like to have more refugees faster for the Syrian refugee sponsors, I don't feel I am able to because of the negative impact that would have on other categories of immigrants who are also deserving.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** I see the levels plan indicates a target of 20,000 to 22,000 caregivers for 2016; the low is 20,000 and the higher is 22,000. We all know the important role that caregivers play for many Canadian families and about the backlog that has grown in this program in recent years. In my riding of Scarborough Centre we have many caregivers who, through this program, have become contributing members to Canadian society and play a very important and integral role.

I know that the department has undertaken a number of changes to this specific program to protect the rights and meet the needs of both the caregivers and the employers.

Could you discuss these reforms and how they will enable the target for admission to be met?

**Hon. John McCallum:** On caregivers, I'll make two points.

One, because of the pattern of inventories in recent years in the levels of admission, those processing times are going to come down in the next two or three years. They'll come down by approximately 10 months per year, I believe. We have good news on the horizon for caregivers; those processing times are going to be coming down.

We also made a commitment in the election which we are going to do and which I think would help caregivers, and that is to set up a system of regulated companies whose job it would be to hire the caregivers on behalf of families. That would help the families. It would make it easier for them to hire caregivers. It would help the caregivers as well, because if there's a bad situation with a family, the company can find the caregiver a different family.

That, I believe, is not under my ministry, but it's under ESDC. It is something that is being worked on now.

I think Richard Wex had something to add.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I'll just add very quickly to the minister's point.

This business line is increasingly under control, Mr. Chair. There's been a decrease in the inventory to the tune of about 34%, from 58,000 to 38,000 over the past year, and as the minister said, as a result of that, although wait times in the past were high, in the order of 48 months, within the next year or so, that will be coming down to 12 months, I guess within the next two years.

•(1215)

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

Ms. Rempel, you have seven minutes, please.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just like to pick up on a question that my colleague Ms. Kwan asked. How many LGBTQ have been admitted as refugees since November 4, 2015?

**Hon. John McCallum:** My understanding is that we don't record that, but I'll turn to David.

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes, we have certain standards, statistical data fields in our systems. We record people's nationality, age, gender, and so forth. We do not count people's sexual orientation. We do not have statistics on that. Simply, we would have to ask it of every individual to have reliable statistics on that.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

In developing the immigration levels report, were any school boards consulted on the budgetary impact of providing services to a 400% year-over-year increase in refugee arrivals?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** Mr. Chair, we have a robust consultation process with the provinces, and in the case of 2016, we also consulted heavily with certain municipalities, but we didn't consult specifically with school boards. We used intergovernmental consultations between the provinces and municipalities in terms of building our levels plan.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Are there any plans to provide funding to local school boards that are struggling to provide services to Syrian refugees?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** Mr. Chair, we have a program we call settlement workers in schools. This is a program that rolls out nationally, outside Quebec, where we target settlement workers in the school system to help bridge that gap between immigrant parents and their children, and what's expected of their children in homework and extracurricular activities, and help to address some of those issues.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Are there no plans for direct funding to school boards outside of that program, given the 400% increase year over year in refugee arrivals?

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** No, we have no plans to fund individual school boards to deliver K-to-12 education.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

What was the total expenditure across government departments including transportation, lighting, photography services, etc., for the photo opportunity held at Pearson airport in late 2015 when the first Syrian refugee arrived?

**Mr. Richard Wex:** We don't have that information available here. I'd be happy to identify the cost associated with that event and report it to the clerk.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

Given that the three amigos conference will be coming up, and certainly the immigration levels would have an impact on this, I'm wondering if the officials can give the committee an update on the status of a formal review for the Mexican visa requirement being lifted.

**Mr. David Manicom:** In its platform the government committed to lifting the Mexican visa; an announcement has not yet been made on that. The review is ongoing.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

The Liberal government has committed to increasing the number of applications it will accept every year under the parents and grandparents class, but it's also said that it will keep constant the number of landings in this category. If you're increasing the numbers of applications that you're going to take by keeping the landing constant, would I be correct in assuming that this would create a significant backlog?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, the number of landings this year will require the processing of more applications than will be received, even under the increased cap, so the inventory will decrease. It won't have decreased as much as it would have.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Would this policy change that the Liberals made cause processing times under the PGP, parent and grandparent, category to increase?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Thank you.

Going back to the downstream impact of increasing refugees by 400% year over year, has there been any specific consultations with health boards or ministers of health specifically on the cost impact of providing mental health services to Syrian refugees?

• (1220)

**Hon. John McCallum:** I have had multiple consultations with my provincial counterparts, ministers of immigration. They may have spoken to their health counterparts. I have not spoken to provincial health ministers.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Would I be correct in characterizing that there haven't been specific consultations with regard to the increase, or any particular estimates of the increase in costs, or service provision levels related to health care for a 400% increase in refugees year over year?

**Hon. John McCallum:** It's not a 400% increase. It's less than that. I just gave my answer. Others may have spoken to health ministers; I have not.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** In your notes that you provided to the committee, you say that it's quadruple the range for 2015. So is it a 400% increase or not?

**Hon. John McCallum:** I'm looking at these numbers 13,800 and 44,800. It's over three times; it's not quite four.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** I would ask for specificity in your notes, Minister, going forward.

Going back to the cost of the immigration loans program, since an hour has passed, I'm wondering if the departmental officials have been able to provide any more information on the projected cost of waiving the immigration loans program for all refugees.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Mr. Chair, we have not identified any additional costs during the course of the hour, because we have been answering questions.

The only thing I would say is that there is no decision on this issue at this moment. Many issues are being considered and discussed internally, and advice is being given to the minister and to the government.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Great. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Kwan, you have seven minutes, please.

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

I have a question to follow up on from May 5, 2016, related to the additional employees who are being sent back to the Middle East to process privately sponsored applications. At that time, I requested information about the details of the operation. How many staff are being sent back? How much has been allocated? At that time, there was no information available. I wonder whether or not that information is now available.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** In terms of processing refugee resettlement files across the entire network, in the period of January to June, which is all we know about so far in terms of temporary duty, we have 412 weeks of temporary duty. I hesitate to use that in the number of people, because some people who go on temporary duty are there for two weeks, and some go for six weeks, so it is a better measure just to go by 412 weeks of temporary duty. That is 288 weeks of temporary duty to the Middle East, and 124 weeks of temporary duty elsewhere, over that six-month period. This is additional to the staff who are already in place in places like Cairo, Nairobi....

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** What is the cost for these 412 weeks and 288 weeks, respectively?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** I don't have that cost breakdown with me. We would have to provide that.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Could we also have the cost of sending the staff back, and the transportation cost related to that?

In my March 10 questions to the minister and to the staff, questions were asked about the breakdown of the funding allocated to the organizations. I keep coming back to the same questions, because the set of answers that came back did not provide the actual funding allocation for those organizations. I wonder whether the allocation for those organizations has now been made, and whether I can receive that information.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** We can certainly provide the information that is being requested in terms of funding allocations to the organizations. I don't know if Ms. Tapley has any additional information she would like to provide at this time.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I know it is a long list of organizations. I have the list already, but I have no dollar amount attached to it. What is the dollar amount that has been allocated to those organizations?

I have a broad statement in each of the answers about what that organization generally does, but I don't know if there is different programming within that organization. I would appreciate a detailed breakdown of the programming costs as well, for us to fully understand what is going on with the funding allocation on the ground, and how refugees and Syrian refugees are actually being supported.

On the live-in caregiver program, I am interested in this. With the 2016 target levels—with the admission of around 16,500 live-in caregivers in 2016, whereas we see 2,750 applications for each new stream in 2015—how many of the cases does the minister anticipate will be left in the backlog of live-in caregiver applications?

In terms of the health care cost, what is the minister's view on the caring for children class and the caring for people with high medical needs class in the future? What is the breakdown of that, out of that global number?

• (1225)

**Hon. John McCallum:** I can't give you those precise numbers.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I will start and then turn it over to Mr. Manicom.

If the question is what the inventory is for caregivers at the end of 2015 and 2016, it was 38,000 and projected to be 26,000, respectively.

I will turn it over to Mr. Manicom to talk about the intake, which is expected to be considerably lower than the range level for caregivers this year.

**Mr. David Manicom:** I would just clarify that the number of expected admissions in the caregiver program this year is 22,000, not 16,000. Therefore, we expect that at the end of year, the inventory will be not much more than one year's worth of levels.

With regard to the two new classes, there's a maximum space available in each class of 2,750 principal applicant spaces. So far, the number of applications into those classes has been quite modest, several hundred. We would be expecting 600, 700, or 800 in each class this year. We've had roughly similar proportions in each year. These numbers are generally small, because the former live-in caregiver program is still open for permanent resident applications for caregivers who were admitted as temporary workers previously.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Does the ministry keep track of live-in caregivers' applications for family reunification? If so, what is the backlog there, and how long is the wait for these caregivers to be reunited with their families?

**Mr. David Manicom:** The inventory numbers we are talking about are the applications of the caregiver and their family members. They are a combined application for permanent residence. In this program, about 50% of the applicants are caregivers and 50% are family members. Processing times right now are backward looking about 48 months, but we expect those to drop rapidly over the next year or two.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Back to the housing issue with respect to the military bases, I actually asked that question some time ago, and I got the answer that \$2.3 million was expended. Now we understand that this money actually came out of another ministry, not from this ministry.

I also asked a question around temporary—

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** A quick question, then.

Given that the housing is actually sitting empty at the moment, is not being used, and there are still refugees.... Although a significant

number have actually been moved into permanent housing, many of them are actually in substandard housing. Is there any thought from the government of utilizing this housing for Syrian refugees?

**Mr. Richard Wex:** No, there is not.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Ehsassi, for seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, thank you kindly for appearing before this committee again.

My first question follows up on one of the issues that has been focused on by other members of this committee, namely, your insistence on being at the airport when the first wave of Syrians arrived in Canada. I seem to recall that it was a moment of great pride for many Canadians. They saw you, the Prime Minister, and premiers in various provinces welcoming Syrians.

Could you explain to us why you thought it was significant that you be at the airport? Was it more in recognition of the great generosity shown by Canadians, or was it to impress upon the Syrians that we were very grateful they were arriving?

• (1230)

**Hon. John McCallum:** I thank you for that question.

I think the second part of your suggestion is important, that we wanted to show to the Syrian refugees that Canada welcomed them.

When the Prime Minister—and not so much me—went to the first plane and welcomed the refugees as new Canadians to their new home, that photograph went around the world. People everywhere in the world saw it. I remember going to Jordan, where I met a group of refugee children at a UNICEF place. Those refugees knew nothing about Canada and their families had not applied to come here, but they came up to me and said, “Oh, I see your Prime Minister welcomed us Syrians at the airport.”

Whereas other countries are closing their doors or making it tougher, I think one of the things we as a country are doing is welcoming people. I think that photograph of the Prime Minister of our country at the airport welcoming refugees sent a message around the world.

For me, it was something I wanted to do, because it was something we had all been working on very hard and we were also starting to see the fruits of our own labour when the first group of refugees arrived, first in Toronto and then later in Montreal. I also spoke to quite a number of refugees at the airport in Amman when they were leaving to come here.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you.

My second question relates to your testimony when you first arrived today. I noted that, as a result of efficient planning and your and your department's insistence on cost saving, \$110 million was saved. In your presentation you said that the cost saving that occurred would probably be earmarked towards a number of different things, one of which is to manage settlement programs. Could you be a bit more specific as to how you will be steering the money that has been saved in a prudent fashion and where you think that money may be used?



**Hon. John McCallum:** Perhaps I'll turn that question of where specifically that money will go over to Dawn Edlund.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** My understanding is the money that was saved in relation to this initiative for IRCC, over \$110 million, has actually gone back into the fiscal framework for the use of the Government of Canada. It has not been repurposed within IRCC.

What we are doing then is having other sources of funds identified for continuing to deal with the Syrian refugee resettlement and the increase in levels plan.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you for that.

**Hon. John McCallum:** In other words, as a consequence of that saving, the overall deficit of the government is smaller.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Absolutely.

In your opening remarks, you talked about your interest in making sure that you were on track to meet new targets that were provided in your ministerial mandate letter. Could you possibly elaborate on that?

**Hon. John McCallum:** To meet...?

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** To meet new targets to make the department more efficient in terms of processing various types of immigrants to this country. You did state that you think that you are on track to meet those targets that were in your mandate letter.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Yes, I do believe we're on track for the 300,000 levels plan, if that is your question. I also talked about the greater efficiency that we learned from the refugee experience that can be imported into the overall program, and that will help us to achieve greater levels in the future, but in terms of the current year, we are on track.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Is this for various categories of applicants?

•(1235)

**Hon. John McCallum:** You never know the absolute number until the end of the year, but we anticipate that we will hit the 300,000 target, or at least within that range.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** We've heard from various witnesses that have taken the time to appear before this committee that there are perhaps better ways of making sure that we do take care of the health care needs of some of the families that are arriving from Syria. Would you be open to the possibility of focusing on that issue to make sure that we go about the provision of health services in the most efficient fashion?

**Hon. John McCallum:** As our Prime Minister likes to say, there's always a better way. I have no doubt there's a better way, but you'd have to explain what they mean when they say a better way. A better way in what sense?

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** In terms of the doctors we heard from.

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds, sir.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** They were explaining to this committee ways that we could tweak the offering of basic dental services.

**The Chair:** Thank you, and the time is up for that round.

Ms. Rempel.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** This question is for the officials. With regard to the increase in refugees that's outlined in the immigration

levels report, are there any plans to target Yazidi girls or Yazidis after the joint partnership program or under any category in the immigration levels report?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Did you say it's for the officials?

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I guess I'll open it up, and then turn to Mr. Manicom.

By way of context, of course, the government recently fulfilled its multi-year commitment for Iraqis in 2015 of over 23,000. We do continue to rely on the UNHCR with respect to referring cases to us.

Persecution based on religion is considered by visa officers, as we know, but we do not track cases based on race or religion. Anecdotally, we know we are dealing with some Yazidi cases at the moment. I also believe that we may be planning a trip later this year to northern Iraq to look at various options.

With that, I'll turn it over to Mr. Manicom to see if there are any additional comments.

**Mr. David Manicom:** And I, in turn, will turn it over to Dawn Edlund.

Operationally, I know we have a trip planned to Erbil in northern Iraq, and we continue to work with the UNHCR to identify the most vulnerable groups. Most of the Yazidi population, which has been very tragically persecuted, are in camps in northern Iraq that are difficult to access, and some are in camps in Turkey. Some cases have been identified by private sponsorship groups and we're endeavouring to get to them as quickly as possible.

Perhaps Ms. Edlund has more details.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** My colleagues have referred to the fact that we're doing the planning now to do an area trip into northern Iraq, to Erbil, in the fall. We're just evaluating whether we can do that and maintain the safety and security of our staff.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Do you anticipate that this trip would result in a specific program, say, under the joint sponsorship program, that would allow Yazidis to be identified and come into Canada, such as the proposal provided by One Free World International, a similar type of program?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** The cases that we're hoping to interview and process in northern Iraq in the fall are cases that we already have in hand. For example, Syrian privately sponsored refugees in our office in Amman are found in northern Iraq, so we're going to go there.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Specifically Yazidis.

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** For the Yazidis who are in northern Iraq, it's not a refugee situation per se because people are internally displaced, and so we have to do some policy work around thinking through what the possible levers would be to work on that population.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Could you perhaps provide the committee with a brief update around the status and current processing levels of resettlement of Iraqi refugees who have been impacted by the crisis in the Middle East? You've now said that going to Erbil in the fall is a priority in terms of looking at Yazidis. That's what I'll take away from that conversation. My understanding is that resettlement of Iraqi refugees has dramatically slowed in the last few months. Would that characterization be correct?

**Mr. David Manicom:** Yes, the Government of Canada met its commitment to resettle over 22,000, I believe. Ms. Edlund?

**Ms. Dawn Edlund:** It was 23,800.

**Mr. David Manicom:** It was 23,000 Iraqi refugees. It was the largest resettlement program of any single nationality that Canada had done in a long time. We continue to process some Iraqi refugees, but at smaller volumes.

• (1240)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Could you provide to the committee where you understand the majority of Yazidis are located? Would it be correct to characterize that would be in northern Iraq?

**Mr. David Manicom:** The Yazidi population is primarily in northern Iraq. Also, some are in parts of Syria, along the no longer barely existing Iraq-Syria border. We understand there are some Yazidi refugees in camps in Turkey as well.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** By this admission, would you say that by meeting the commitment on Iraqi refugees and not increasing that or focusing on that area, given that Yazidis are typically located in that area right now, perhaps we're missing an opportunity to bring Yazidis to Canada?

**Mr. David Manicom:** No, I would not agree with that characterization.

There are large numbers of extremely desperate populations all over the Middle East. At this time we are processing some Yazidi cases. Most of the Yazidi population, tragically, are not accessible to our officials or officials of any resettlement country.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, the Conservative round is up, Mr. Saroya.

We'll go to Mr. Sarai. I understand you'll be splitting your time with Mr. Chen.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Five minutes, please.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** Minister, we constantly hear from cities and provinces from the Maritimes to Saskatchewan, even Vancouver Island, from our economic forums, that we need new immigrants, more immigrants. Everyone is hungry for them. Do you think the current numbers, even though they are the largest since World War I, would be enough to satisfy the demand, or will we still be short of the need for more immigrants?

**Hon. John McCallum:** That's a very good question, and it summarizes a big part of my job for this summer.

Currently, as I said, we are admitting 300,000 in 2016, and by November of this year we have to announce a plan for levels in 2017, 2018, and 2019. That will address precisely your question. I don't want to prejudge what that number will be before I do the consultations, but personally, I will be going, and the parliamentary secretary will as well, across the country and talking to, listening to, various groups in every province and territory, I believe, and getting their input.

I think, in general, without getting into specific numbers, given our aging population, given our increasing dependence on immigrants, that we definitely need immigrants. Whether we need significantly more or not much more or a lot more will be an outcome of these consultations that will soon take place.

**Mr. Randeep Sarai:** On March 14, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of immigration, your counterparts, met in Ottawa to talk about the future of immigration in Canada. Can you share with us what that meeting looked like and what their requests were?

**Hon. John McCallum:** My department, the provinces, and I co-operated fantastically well on everything to do with the Syrian refugees. I do remember when I initially asked the provincial ministers how many they could each bring in, the total came to more than 25,000, which was our target. The provinces were keen and positive in working with us on this refugee project. That's where we first met. I think, in general, we have a strong relationship. I am planning a trip to India later this year, and I've invited my provincial counterparts to come. They all won't come, but some may.

I think we do work well together. Where we sometimes disagree is that they always want more provincial nominees, and I cannot always give them as many as they want. That is sometimes a bit of a bone of contention, but I would say overall the atmosphere is good.

There's one other point on that I would mention. There was a proposal from the Quebec minister to have a federal-provincial meeting on the credentials issue and to learn from best practices on the credentials issue. To me that's an important topic, but it's something that is about 90% in provincial jurisdiction and very little in federal. The fact that Quebec, in particular, but all of the provinces were positive, wanted to meet with us and with each other to compare best practices was a good idea that we will definitely follow up on.

• (1245)

**The Chair:** Mr. Chen, for one minute please.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on the earlier questions of my colleague across the way around consultation with school boards. I believe it's always important to look at history and to learn from the mistakes of the past. I know in my former role at the school board, five or six years ago, we settled hundreds of Roma refugee children. We provided classrooms for them, hired new teachers, and the peers were taught about who the refugees were. Under the previous government's so-called crackdown on bogus refugees, these children disappeared. According to one peer-reviewed *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* study, hundreds succeeded with their refugee claims, but most did not.

**The Chair:** Five seconds.

**Mr. Shaun Chen:** Instead they encountered racist rhetoric that drew on stereotypes about Roma being fraudsters, beggars, and criminals. This affected the school board adversely. I know Ms. Tapley mentioned earlier about school boards not being consulted. Perhaps in the future this would be a consideration of the department.

**The Chair:** A quick answer.

**Ms. Catrina Tapley:** As the minister has indicated, we'll have a robust consultation scheduled for 2017, and there will be an opportunity for all to make submissions as part of that process.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Perhaps I could add one point on that. We are a government that tends to respect federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions. There is nothing less federal and more provincial than schools and school boards. We can consider that idea, but some might think that would be intruding into territory that is not ours if a federal government directly approached the school boards which are so clearly in the provincial domain.

**The Chair:** That will conclude our rounds of questioning.

Perhaps, Mr. Manicom, the previous request I made I'll try to get at in a slightly different way. Past governments have provided target levels by mission. Would it be possible for you to provide target levels by missions to the committee?

**Mr. David Manicom:** I'd defer to my operational colleagues. Generally speaking, we do processing more and more at different stages and at different centralized offices around the world and in Canada. The mission-by-mission permanent resident targets are becoming somewhat less meaningful, but we could examine what information we could make available.

**Mr. Richard Wex:** I think that's fair, but it is becoming increasingly difficult given the integrated nature of our network electronically. I think it would be very difficult to track, but we will undertake to do so.

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

Ms. Kwan.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** I want to ask the minister and the officials to provide the information we've requested before the end of session. I ask this because previously requested information from this department has been very slow in coming. My staff just notified me to say we just got a response to a question we asked back on May 10. I find that really challenging. Also, the answers we get back are often deficient. They do not fully answer the questions that were put to them. Today, I had to ask for further information on questions that I've already asked.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, if you could make that request to the minister and to the staff. That would be much appreciated.

**The Chair:** You heard the request. We will be doing an interim report, and the timeliness of information from the department is critical for us to be able to properly prepare that report. We're not saying to do it forthwith, but would it be possible to have the requested information before the end of the session?

• (1250)

**Mr. Richard Wex:** Mr. Chair, the request is certainly noted and as always, we will do the very best we can. We'll go back to the office and assess what is outstanding. We will commit to do the very best we can, as we always do.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That is highly appreciated.

On those items that you are not able to provide, please provide us with timelines for when that information will arrive at the committee.

I would like to thank the minister for appearing. It's always a pleasure to have you before our committee. I would also like to thank the staff from the department.

I will suspend for two minutes to allow the minister and staff to leave, and then we will return with our votes on the estimates.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Thank you.

• (1250)

(Pause)

• (1250)

**The Chair:** The meeting shall resume.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA

Vote 1a—Operating expenditures.....\$65,318,959

Vote 10a—Grants and contributions.....\$126,998,832

(Votes 1a and 10a agreed to)

**The Chair:** Shall I report the votes on the supplementary estimates to the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.





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