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Mr. Dean Allison

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•(1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): I call this meeting to order pursuant to Standing Order 108 (2), the study on employability in Canada.

I do want to thank our witnesses for coming out today. Thank you for taking the time.

I know, Mr. Cardozo, you had some words to speak of in *The Hill Times* about how important this study was. So we appreciate your being here as well to share some of your wisdom and insight with us.

We'd ask that you keep your opening comments to seven minutes each so that we can get through with some questions and answers from all the parties concerned.

Mr. Cardozo, I believe you're going to lead off, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo (Executive Director, The Alliance of Sector Councils): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. It's a pleasure to be here today.

[Translation]

My name is Andrew Cardozo and I'm the Executive Director of the Alliance of Sector Councils. It's a great pleasure to be here to speak to you about employability. In my opinion, this issue is vitally important to the success of our economy. As you know, there is a critical skills shortage in some regions of Canada and in certain sectors of the economy. Today, I'd like to discuss solutions and the role of the national Sector Councils.

[English]

Simply put, sector councils are partnership organizations that bring together the main stakeholders in key sectors of the economy to develop and implement industry-driven—and I stress industry-driven—labour market solutions, and they do this sector by sector. The solutions are thus tailor-made for each sector. Typically, sector councils include employers, employees, educators, governments, and other relevant stakeholders. They are funded by a combination of public and private sector funds.

I would like to suggest that skills shortages are the number one issue facing employers in Canada, and as I said in a piece I wrote for *The Hill Times* recently, Mr. Chairman, I do think this committee gets it. You understand that this is one of the most important issues facing our economy. I'm pleased to say that the federal government

has been supporting the work of sector councils for close to two decades. Developed first by the Conservative government in the 1980s, the program has continued to grow through the Liberal government, and again now under the Conservative government.

While we are on the subject of party support, I will tell you that the Quebec and Manitoba governments, be they Péquiste, Liberal, or NDP, have also been supporting and working with similar provincial *conseils sectoriels* and sector councils in Quebec and Manitoba, respectively.

How did we get to this situation of skills shortages? Simply put, the economy has been in a growth phase for some time now. This growth is coupled with a declining birth rate and an aging workforce, many of whom are taking early retirement, which further exacerbates the skill shortages and thus puts the economy at risk. Demographic issues aside, the effective training and development of Canada's youth remains a challenge. Educators are not communicating the needs of the economy to the future workforce, and the education system has not been training these young people for the precise needs of employers.

Immigration is only a partial solution, but there too, we are not bringing in the people and the skills that we need. For example, while the need for skilled trades has been growing, the number of immigrants we are bringing in with skilled trades training, which is only about 4% or 5%, has been decreasing in the last few years. For newcomers, as you know, the issues are also integrating immigrants into the workforce and the recognition of foreign credentials that are so vital.

I want to mention two major issues, and I think I am preaching to the converted, because I think you agree with these issues, but I do want to place them on the record.

Having a skilled workforce is a national issue and a Canada-wide issue. In order for Canada to prosper and remain competitive, obtaining skilled workers is essential. Increased national leadership on this issue is required in the years ahead. Employers from all parts of the country need access to highly trained and skilled workers in each sector of the economy, and workers from every region should have access to high-skilled training—an educated workforce.

The second issue is advancing Canada's prosperity, productivity, and competitiveness. It is clear that a more skilled workforce means a more prosperous and a more productive workforce, and as a result, increased efficiency and decreased waste. As Canada seeks to compete increasingly with the U.S., Europe, and places like China and India, it is important that we have the kind of skilled workforce that can allow us to compete with those countries.

Let me touch on a few solutions, which I have described in greater detail in our written brief. These include an enhanced relationship between government and sector councils to bring stakeholders together to address labour market challenges and to implement solutions, preparing more sophisticated labour market information on particular sectors of the economy to assess what the skills shortages are and where they are coming up.

Labour market information is a complex amalgam of a number of different statistics and polls that are done. It's a matter of getting these to be more sophisticated, and thus being able to get more granulated, more specific information for particular sectors of the economy in particular regions and even in particular cities in the country.

Increased opportunities for apprenticeship and trades are very important. And here I note the government's plan, as announced in the recent budget, in terms of enhanced apprenticeship programs. This is very important and very timely.

In closing, I want to mention a few other issues with regard to integrating the under-represented groups in society. This is not only a matter of addressing the interests of those individuals who come from the so-called under-represented groups, it's now a matter of the whole economy, because the whole economy needs access to all the people who are available to work. These include working to increase the workforce participation of aboriginal people; finding ways to ensure efficient foreign credential recognition—and I want to note again, here, the government's plan to introduce an agency to assess and recognize foreign credentials, another very important development—helping employers with the hiring and retention of new immigrants; increasing the opportunities for Canadians with disabilities, which I know is a matter of particular interest to some members of this committee; and last, increasing the opportunities for women in non-traditional occupations.

I'm very pleased, Mr. Chairman, that my colleagues from particular sector councils will talk about how these issues play out in two key sectors of the economy, namely, mining and the high-tech sector. And they will be able to give you some real examples of how they have made a difference in creating a more skilled workforce in those two sectors.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1115)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cardozo.

We're going to move on to Mr. Hébert from the Mining Industry Human Resources Council.

Mr. Hébert, for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Hébert (Executive Director, Mining Industry Human Resource Council) Mr. Chairman, committee members, my name is Paul Hébert. I'm the Executive Director of the Mining Industry Human Resources Council. It's a pleasure for me to be here today to address the committee.

[*English*]

It's my pleasure to be here to give you a very brief overview of the minerals and metals sector in Canada and its importance to the economy.

There are about 388,000 Canadians employed in this sector. Some of Canada's largest employers are counted among mining industry employers, and they include companies such as Alcan, Barrick, and Teck Cominco. Mining contributes about 4% to the GDP.

The segment of the industry that my organization represents, which is exploration mining, smelting, and refining, employs about 130,000 Canadians.

Corporate income tax paid by the mining industry in 2004 was about \$702 million, representing a 94% increase over the year 2000, and that's excluding oil and gas. The oil and gas industry on their own paid \$3.2 billion in income tax, representing a 234% increase over 2000.

We're talking about a sector that's of great importance to the Canadian economy. It's really an engine of Canada's economy. It's one of Canada's most productive industrial sectors. However, because of some of the factors that Andrew just mentioned, we're facing some serious challenges. Yes, much of our workforce is planning to retire. We're also coming out of a period of particularly low enrolment in mining-related programs, and we're facing some recruiting challenges as well.

There is, of course, the demographic bubble that all sectors have to deal with. Our situation is even a little worse because we're coming out of a period when there was little hiring done, and the average age continued to increase while new entrants weren't coming in.

To give you an example, the age cohort of people aged 40 to 54 represents about 50% of our workforce. The same cohort for the rest of Canada's workforce represents only 39%. There is a significant proportion of workers aged 50 and older in all mining occupations. If we compare that to workers aged 30 and under, we see a stark contrast. For example, in skilled trades and semi-skilled occupations, we see that only about 7% of employees are under the age of 30.

We know that up to 40% of our workforce will retire over the next 10 years. Those workers will take with them an average of 21 and a half years of mining sector experience, representing a dramatic loss of intellectual capital to our sector. Some of the risks associated with that include increased production costs and a potentially negative impact on safety.

We have demographics coupled with enrolment trends. Very quickly, the period of 2000 to 2004 saw a 19% increase in overall engineering enrolment. During the same time, 40% fewer students enrolled in mining and minerals-related engineering programs. We have a confluence of factors that are creating this perfect storm of skill shortages in the minerals and metals sector.

To quantify it, the total cumulative demand over the next 10 years for people is projected to range between 57,000 people under a no-growth scenario and up to 82,000 people under a high-growth scenario.

The challenge in meeting skills requirements includes the issue of education and training. Both employers and educators tell us there are skills gaps. There is a need for tighter relationships among individual institutions and employers and for nationally standardized skill sets and curricula.

In particular, when looking at the skills requirements of the northern workforce and rural and remote areas, essential skills become of primary importance. We're again looking at training somewhere in the neighbourhood of 60,000 to 80,000 people over the next decade.

• (1120)

Technological change also factors into the challenge as the rapid evolution of this technology puts a lot of pressure on individual institutions to keep their equipment current.

In addressing these challenges, the industry has set out a number of objectives. The first, which Andrew touched on, is to increase and make the best use of all sources of supply: women, who currently represent only about 13% of our industry; aboriginal people; new Canadians; and older workers. Aboriginal people present both a bright light and an opportunity. The mining industry is among Canada's largest private sector employers of aboriginal people, who make up about 5% of our workforce.

The second objective is to address these skills gaps through developing programs to attract retired workers and retain older workers; promoting and increasing mentoring programs, and that includes not only mentoring new employees, but beginning those relationships even early on when students are still completing their studies; and developing a collaborative cross-industry education and training strategy so that we have consistency and mobility across the sector.

That standardization of skills and training delivery will provide the industry with a mobile workforce with the skills it needs today and will need into the future.

In conclusion, I would say that the minerals and metals sector will be facing a crisis in the next 10 years. Employers and organized labour, as well as industry associations, have taken up the challenge, each doing their own part, but we will need to increase those relationships and improve on the work we're doing, and that includes the role of government that can be brought to bear on these issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hébert.

We're going to move along now to Mr. Swinwood, who is representing the Software Human Resource Council.

You have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Paul Swinwood (President, Software Human Resource Council Inc.): Good morning, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the committee.

My name is Paul Swinwood, and I am president of the Software Human Resource Council. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share in this examination of employability issues.

The Software Human Resource Council is a not-for-profit council, one of 33. We work with industry, education, associations, and governments—and I'll put an "s" on "governments"—both federal and provincial, to address employment issues affecting the IT sector. Our goal is to ensure that Canada has an adequate supply of IT workers to compete in today's interesting global economy.

The council, over the last 12 years, has done a lot to lead us to believe that in order to succeed, our nation must focus on its current high-wage economy—and I have some numbers I'll follow through on—and especially in the IT sector. The current IT sector is responsible for 600,000 jobs in the Canadian economy, \$137 billion in revenue, and billions more in exports and capital expenditures.

Also, the IT sector is very fast-paced. For those of you who have been following it, we change the technologies about once every two years. It's an interesting place to have been for the last 40 years.

IT is prominent in every sector. We enable the successes for each and every other industry, and clearly, the IT sector has a major impact on the Canadian economy as a whole and what drives our economy.

As concerns the workers, the IT workforce, the professionals, so far in 2006 the unemployment rate in Canada's IT sector has been hovering between 2% and 2.5%. This compares to the 6% unemployment rate nationally for all sectors. This has made for a very tight labour market, and nine of the provinces and territories have identified the IT sector and computer professionals as sectors with skill shortages.

To compound this problem, there has been a 70% decrease in enrolment in computer science programs over the past five years. The additional concern surrounding this is that 50% of the IT workforce is made up of university graduates, and another 27% are college or CEGEP graduates. Also, a combination of new technologies, offshoring, and outsourcing has and will change the face of IT over the near future. This, combined with our impending baby-boomer exodus, is equalling major problems for our sectors as we go forward.

So what are the key labour market issues for our sector? The first surrounds competencies. Employers are looking for professionals who not only can do the technical work, but more importantly, can become part of the solution and add value for their business. They are looking for people who can meet with customers, market and present ideas, and communicate with colleagues and work in teams. It sounds simple.

There is a significant lack of employees in our field with what we call “the package”. The package is made up of the IT skills, the business management that I mentioned earlier, and interpersonal skills. Employees with all these skills are in short supply, and in fact, workers with these skills enjoy a premium compensation. I just met with a company yesterday that was talking about a 10% compensation benefit for people with those skills, in order to attract them.

One of our goals moving forward is to find a way to ensure there's a constant stream of employees with the package entering our workforce through the educational system, the career changers, and by utilizing internationally educated professionals.

The Software Human Resource Council has devised an occupational skills profile model related to the NOC codes to define the occupations in our sector. We currently have 27 different occupations that we track, and another nine are in development.

We believe that in order to begin addressing the need for employees with the package, the OSPM is being expanded to include interpersonal skills and business skills, as well as the new and emerging technologies. The major effort that we're looking at is in retraining managers. Strong management is a major retention strategy for most IT companies.

The second issue we've identified involves education, training, and learning. IT workers are highly educated. More than half of them have university degrees, and many have PhDs. It's a highly qualified and educated workforce. The technical training these professionals have is on par with anywhere in the world. Our university and college systems provide world-class technical training. In addition, industry averages 10 days of training—that's formal training—per year, per worker, for each of these 600,000 workers. This proves that both industry and the workforce are investing in the future of the IT sector. However, there's still room for improvement.

• (1125)

In both continuing education and in post-secondary institutions, there are challenges. Employers, the market, industry, need workers not only with technical skills but with interpersonal and business skills. Too many of our post-secondary schools still offer adequate or advanced technical training, but nowhere do they give business strategy, marketing, and general liberal arts mixed in with the technology. However, there is real demand for such rounded workers.

Through research, SHRC has identified and sees value in the increase of workers with the package, and we are working with the educational institutions to revise their curricula to better reflect the broad needs of industry and incorporate the soft skills and business skills into the curriculum. SHRC also endorses the need for vertical integration of competencies through the educational continuum.

The third issue we're working on, secondary and post-secondary enrolments, I will skip through fairly quickly since I've been given one minute to take on this. If Canada is to be globally competitive, we need to have more people enrolled in our post-secondary education.

The final issue is career mobility, diversity, and equity. Twenty-seven percent of our workforce is female; 10% of the workforce are

visible minorities; 1% are aboriginal. That 1% translates to about 6,000 aboriginals, of which 5,500 will have a post-secondary degree. We have some interesting challenges as we go forward.

With that, I'd like to conclude. The information we have presented represents some of the challenges we're facing within the IT sector. We are in a global economy and a global race for being competitive. We need people who are highly educated, well trained, and well skilled.

Thank you.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Swinwood.

We'll now start our first round of questioning, seven minutes to include both questions and answers.

Mr. Regan, seven minutes, sir.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for appearing before us today and for giving us your thoughts. They're very valuable and important to us in this study.

I think in some of the documents you've given us there is an indication of the quantification of skill shortages that you're seeing in your industries. But if you haven't, I know that...for instance, in the executive summary of the brief from the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, the indication is that the cumulative gap you see over the next 10 years is 70,810 positions as a shortage in that area. I guess I'd ask the other two also—and perhaps it's in your documents, I haven't noticed it yet—if you could quantify for me what you're seeing in your areas.

Second, what are the top three measures the Government of Canada should be taking to address the skills shortage?

Third—and I'm sorry to give you a list of questions, but I'll start with this and see how we go through the seven minutes—what do you see as the role of basic literacy, for example, in terms of your industries? For instance, we're seeing more and more need for highly skilled workforces. You need people who have basic skills, the basic foundation, because simply reading the manuals can be more complicated these days for mechanics, and in all kinds of fields. One of the challenges we face in meeting the skills shortage, it seems to me, is how to move people from the margins of society, those who don't have strong literacy skills, up to a point where they can then work on becoming tradespeople or developing skills that can be useful in the kinds of industries you're talking about today.

Mr. Swinwood talked about the need for more people to be enrolled in post-secondary education, and I wonder if there are one or two key measures that you see the Government of Canada taking to assist that.

If that isn't enough, I'll have more later.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Mr. Regan, I'll answer a couple of those and leave some time for my colleagues.

I should stress that in terms of the organization I am here representing, the Alliance of Sector Councils, it is a coalition of 30 or so.

I'll draw your attention to appendix 1 in our written submission. What we have done is outlined the skill shortage in various key sectors. I don't have a global figure for you, but just to cite a couple of them, the construction industry will need to replace about 150,000 workers in the next 10 years. In the trucking industry there will be a shortage of about 37,000 people a year over the next five years. If you think about that, it means you won't get your Prada fashions, you won't get your loaf of bread delivered to your store, if the trucks aren't running. Trucking is just one of those very important areas.

In terms of the top three recommendations, I'll just mention one, the one we're here to highlight, and that is the partnerships that are formed through sector councils. It's important to stress that they're more than a partnership of talking heads; they're really a partnership of action and of making things happen. What happens within these sector councils is that they identify and implement solutions. You have all the players that are relevant to each of the sectors around the table, and they come up with solutions and actually implement them, whether it's in terms of providing training to people in the workplace or providing courses to high school students or providing courses that will be delivered in high schools, universities, and colleges, or other training.

We're not doing all of this everywhere. Some of the more mature councils that have been around longer are doing a lot more than some of the newer ones that are developing. But it's that kind of partnership for developing and really making things happen, which I think is a hugely successful objective and program that has been part of the federal government's program for a while.

• (1135)

Mr. Paul Hébert: On the quantification you have in the document and the top three priorities, I would say that ongoing and accurate labour market information is essential to the mining industry and to the system that provides the people with the skills it needs. That is to say, the universities and community colleges need to know how many of what kinds of people with which skills will be needed when, so that they can add the seats that will deliver those people.

Along the same lines, the second would be to continue to support the development, updating, and administration of occupational standards. In mining this is very important because many of the production occupations are not regulated; they aren't recognized trades. We are working with industry to develop those standards, and that will continue to be very important going forward, especially as we see new Canadians entering the sector. In order to have a means of recognizing foreign credentials, we need to know what industry needs today. We need a list of the skills and levels of skill required to compare those against what new Canadians can bring to the table.

Third, as we try to make best use of all sources of supply, we're also focusing on retention. We need to keep the people who are currently in our sector and who will enter our sector going forward.

Part of that includes making sure that young Canadians have the appropriate information with which to make informed career choices, that is, accurate information, so that they're not surprised down the road by what they didn't know the sector was, then end up choosing something else. With that accurate information they can make an informed choice, thereby increasing retention and minimizing all the costs associated with churn and training new entrants.

The Chair: Mr. Swinwood, there are about 45 seconds left.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Let me just touch on a couple of things.

First of all, Canada's birth rate is around 337,000 people a year, growing at about 3% to 4%. We're looking at 330,000 to 350,000 young people coming through the system. We need the ability to be able to impact on those people and make sure they understand what the options are as they come through, because decisions are being made in grades 7 and 8 that prevent them from going to post-secondary education in a lot of cases. Having the right information available at the right level, getting to the primary schools, the high schools...and that's about as late as you can go in terms of having people make decisions on careers. They're being streamed out at that stage.

Also, we need a national approach to skills upgrading. I realize this is Canada, I realize we have the federal-provincial negotiations, but we need a national approach. We are not 13 countries competing with India; we are Canada. We have to take a look at a national approach that will make Canada successful on this.

I've used up my 45 seconds.

The Chair: You've used that and a little bit more—but very good.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: But I don't feel strongly about that, by the way.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move on to the next questioner for seven minutes.

Madame Bonsant

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good afternoon. You spoke at length about the shortage of workers. I've toured my riding and I know for a fact that there are secondary schools in every riding. Do you have any plans to make the rounds of secondary schools to give students some idea of skills development initiatives in your sector?

Given the high dropout rate among high school students, these youths are not all likely to be engineers or surgeons. However, not all your industries are looking for engineers and surgeons. They have a greater need for so-called blue collar skills.

Mr. Swinwood, is it your intention, as you stated, to give these young people academic and professional training as early as their third year of secondary school? They could receive 15 hours of training per week in your facility, with the rest of their time spent in the classroom. Would this approach not be conducive to the kind of skills development you have in mind and not help these youths build a future for themselves?

I have a second question for you. Are you prepared to hire people 50 years of age or older who, after losing their job, have retrained in the forestry, furniture or textiles sector? Are you prepared to hire them to give them a second chance?

● (1140)

[English]

Mr. Paul Swinwood: There are three different things we're already involved in. First, we have created a set of learning outcomes for grades 11 and 12. We have been working with six provinces at this time to give them the knowledge and experience of what the IT sector is all about through changing the curriculum that is delivered by the provincial ministry of education. So we're already doing that.

It's been very successful in British Columbia. Our first delivery of it involved 100 students who were all at risk. They were students who they were afraid were not going to complete grade 11, let alone grade 12. This was funded by the apprenticeship group that was expecting them to go out to work. Only two of those students got jobs out of high school; the other 98 went on to post-secondary education. We think that's a very successful program.

We're now working with Alberta. The Toronto District School Board has implemented it in Toronto to try to attack their 42% drop-out rate, I believe it is. So we're implementing that in a couple of the inner-city schools to be able to give them this opportunity.

We partnered with Industry Canada and the computers for schools program, where they take used computers from the government and provide them to some of these inner-city schools that can't afford them. So we've done it through partnerships with industry and education.

On the retraining and re-skilling of people, we have been attempting to work within the system of how retraining and re-skilling works. At the present time, the funding available is for a maximum of six weeks.

One of the issues when you're re-skilling someone is that you have to re-educate them and provide them with the background and the knowledge. So we need a slight change in the re-skilling funding model, to enable people to have the support to go back and get the education to be employable in our sector.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: I knew a man who worked for 35 years as a welder. He lost his job and applied for a new one. His prospective employer had a particular job requirement. The company was looking for a high pressure welding machine operator. The man would have had to take a six-month course and was prepared to attend evening classes. The company, however, was unwilling to accommodate him. It therefore lost out on the opportunity to gain an experienced worker, even though he did not have the required certificate.

Do you allocate to companies a percentage of your budget for continuing education?

[English]

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Yes, our sector probably spends three to five times the national average on re-skilling and skills upgrading of our people. You will find that a lot of the people from the high-tech

sector have gone back to community colleges to take skills upgrading, even though they're university graduates.

It's the way our system can work in Canada, and it's a wonderful system to be able to do that through the CEGEPs and community colleges, working together with industry. We have a lot of continuing education programs, and I'm now impacting some of them to get the soft skills in there as well.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: I see.

In Quebec, post-secondary education programs are a provincial responsibility. The problem here is the lack of federal government funding for post-secondary education. We'll work hard to obtain funding for these young people, to point them in the right direction and to ensure they receive a good education.

[English]

Mr. Paul Swinwood: I have observed exactly the same thing.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: You still have some time left.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Have you ever asked the chambers of commerce for assistance? They are familiar with their territories. Quebec has local employment centres and Carrefour-jeunesse centres. These agencies are familiar with both the strengths and weaknesses of young people. Do you work with these agencies? I'm talking about Quebec. I'm not familiar with the situation in the other provinces and I don't know if they have the same type of system in place. Have you thought of turning to the chambers of commerce for help in finding workers and as a source of information about the workers and professions you need?

● (1145)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Swinwood, you have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Yes, we have created a partnership in Quebec with TECHNOCompetence, which is a sector council funded by Emploi-Québec. We have a partnership agreement with them, and they are our arm in Quebec for the things we do nationally. So we've worked with the associations and the different groups, and we've done quite a bit of work at that level to try to make it visible.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to the last question of this round.

Madame Savoie.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Thank you for your submissions. They were very interesting.

One of the submissions described the need for a national strategy. Could you elaborate further on that? What types of federal programs would be needed to support such a strategy? How would you rate the current federal programs that lend support to the Alliance of Sector Councils?

Mr. Paul Hébert: A national strategy presents such a tremendous challenge that we are already starting to see local, regional and provincial stakeholders launch initiatives in this area. We're beginning to appreciate the importance of pan-Canadian coordination efforts in order to avoid duplication. There already has been some duplication and we have no time to lose on this score.

One very important component of the national strategy is identifying the role sector councils could play in the information sharing process. They could act as information centres for groups such as education networks, associations, colleges or universities.

Our programs benefit from effective, sound support. Naturally, sector councils would welcome even more help. There is no shortage of work. Our groups are small and they have rather lofty goals. We try, with our relatively modest resources, to have an impact on the labour market.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Currently, what ingredient is missing to formulate this national strategy? You maintain that such a strategy is needed and that it is one of your recommendations. What kinds of problems are you encountering?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Every day, we work with our partners on strategy development. We've yet to complete our strategy because of problems with our relations with and delegation of responsibilities to the provinces. A number of stakeholders are involved. Coordinating the process remains a challenge but we are nevertheless making some progress.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: I'd just like to add something to that.

Formulating a national strategy is a complex undertaking, owing to the fact that a number of stakeholders are involved in the process. [English]

I would suggest that there are a few major things. Having good labour market information is important so that we have an idea nationally and locally of what the needs are. Foreign credential recognition is an important issue, and the role the federal government is taking with regard to a new agency is important. Apprenticeship is an important area.

I would say that the biggest problem for a national strategy is the federal-provincial jurisdictional issue. Whatever means the federal government has at its disposal to work with provinces and school boards are useful. Sector councils are one of those options.

As Paul Swinwood mentioned, we're working with school boards and with provincial departments of education, something that the federal government doesn't do directly but that we are able to do indirectly. We have established a committee to work with school boards across the country. All provinces are involved and are very happy to be involved, and it doesn't obligate them to do anything. Rather, they are involved in a discussion. They learn from each other and take what they can from each other, all with regard to getting a more skilled workforce across the board and having provinces and school boards learn from each other about the things that are

happening. Cooperation and partnership: we talk about those things. But very action-oriented programs are probably the most useful.

• (1150)

Mr. Paul Swinwood: If I may, I'll drop down to an example for this one.

Both our community colleges and our training funding partners out there across the country focus on the community, which they should. There's no question about that. But we've attempted to get some students into post-secondary, continuing education, re-skilling courses and have been told that there's no need for them in our community and therefore no funding is available.

The big picture is not being shown and looked at—and this is federal government money being spent. The focus is too much on the community. As well, community colleges and universities look at what they can attract for people from their community, for their community. There needs to be more of a focus on.... For example, suppose we need people for mining. How do people in a spot where there is no mining get mining education? How do we tell them it is there? And how do we allow them to go there to get the education and training? So there is a mobility issue; there is a knowledge issue. In Sarnia, at this time, I don't imagine that there is any mining training going on, even though there may be people who need to know about it and could get there.

The national opportunity to look at education, the ability to have mobility so students can go where the education is and have some support—

Ms. Denise Savoie: I have just a couple of follow-up questions.

It is a coordination role and an information exchange role, as I understand it. You specified foreign credentialing. Where is that agency at? Has it been set up? Are you part of it? Have the sector councils or the alliance been involved?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: The government talked about it in the election, and then in the recent budget announced a certain figure of money to go towards that. There are consultations under way, and sector councils are involved in those consultations.

We are certainly very much interested in being involved in that agency, because we'd like to bring to the table or to that process the various needs in various sectors of the economy.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Very quickly, is there any federal presence at the sector council or in the alliance?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: On all the boards of all the councils there's usually a non-voting person from HRSD who participates, but there are a lot more other kinds of cooperation that take place. For example, we held a recent workshop on labour market information where many different federal folks were involved. So it's a very close working relationship.

The Chair: That's all the time we have for that.

We'll move to our last round. You have seven minutes, Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Good morning. Thanks for coming in. This is very informative.

Coming from Alberta, I'm very aware of the issue of labour shortages in every industry, not just of skilled workers. Try to go to a Tim Hortons to buy a coffee, and oftentimes you'll find that the drive-through is closed or that they have restricted hours because they can't get the employees they need.

My first question is about the big picture. Mr. Cardozo, in every single sector, when we talk to people from any sector, there are labour shortages, and in every case it seems that the shortage is very desperate. In your mind, what are the biggest challenges, both sector-wise and region-wise, in the country?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Region-wise is the easier one to answer. You gave part of the answer, which of course is Alberta. Alberta and B.C. probably have the hottest economies in the country, so labour shortages are most serious there. Those two provinces attract a number of young people, and then you get labour shortages in the other provinces because a whole lot of people are moving to Alberta and B.C. A lot of younger skilled workers are moving there. In other provinces, especially on the east coast, you might have an older, less skilled workforce because of that.

It's hard to say about sectors of the economy. I guess there are different stages, and some are more critical than others. The projects around the Olympics and the tar sands such as construction and petroleum are probably in the most dire straits.

Having said that, I quickly want to take it back, because I think of a number of other sectors. As you said, in the hospitality industry, Tim Hortons in Fort McMurray has to close at 4 p.m. because they can't get people to staff that. Imagine the poor people living in Fort McMurray who can't get a Tim Hortons after 4 p.m. That's a crisis in the city.

We laugh about little things like that, but it becomes pretty important when you can't get your bread because the truck can't deliver it.

It's hard to quantify some sectors that are worse off and in more critical situations. I would say there are certain occupations that are probably in more dire straits, such as computer engineering and those sorts of things.

• (1155)

Mr. Mike Lake: I want to change gears and move over to Mr. Swinwood for a second.

Mr. Swinwood, your industry is perfectly suited to include and benefit from a couple of groups of underutilized or underemployed Canadians. First of all, there are people with physical disabilities. Specifically, I'm wondering what steps your industry is taking to take advantage of an enormous opportunity to use the abilities of this group of people.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: The interesting thing is that as long as I've been a member of the industry, we've had things like Braille printers. We have the capacity to work with people who are 80% blind. When I talk to Microsoft, RIM, or IBM, every one of the large employers has always had a disabilities capacity in the system. It's a matter of

what percentage we can convince to take the education in order to to be employable in the sector.

Mr. Mike Lake: So you're saying you're having more of a challenge with people with physical disabilities actually stepping up to apply and take the training.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Applying, right.

• (1200)

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay, that's interesting.

The second group of people who are a bit more personal for me is adults with autism. I think particularly of high-functioning adults with Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning autism, for example, who may not have the interpersonal skills you're looking for as part of the package, but who may have the ability to really contribute in terms of some of the skills you require in the IT sector.

It's not something you would probably have come prepared to answer specifically, but I want your thoughts on how to include those types of people. It would also obviously require some investment to train people. I think there's a real opportunity, given the labour shortages we have right now in that area.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: One of the challenges our sector faces of course is a global economy. For us, if we can't find the people, then the Internet allows us to transfer work almost anywhere in the world on one minute's notice.

Part of the challenge is how we participate and what partnerships we can form as part of the social development of our community. I don't have an exact answer on the one you've asked, but I know we have a lot of organizations with a social sense within the community. If there's an opportunity that you know of, or something that can be put forward, I'd be more than happy to work with the companies on it.

One of our major issues in our sector is that we do a lot of work that is totally time-dependent and must be as close to perfect as we can make it—even though most of us who have Microsoft Windows would disagree on that. When we put applications in place, there are things we have to ensure from a safety and society point of view—nuclear power plant controls, radiation controls, some of these things. So there are some areas where it doesn't work, but there are a lot of social areas where it would work. I can see an opportunity there if there was a program we could work on.

The Chair: Thirty seconds.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: I just wanted to add, Mr. Lake, that I think you've really highlighted the issue there.

Regarding persons with disabilities, I've had the opportunity to work on issues around employment equity for some 20 years or more. A long time ago the debate was about the individuals and what kind of rights they would have and whether this would be a cost to employers, a cost of doing business. Today the debate is quite different. Now employers are saying they want those people. So it's not only an issue of the individual; it's now an issue that employers really want to solve and the economy has to solve, because we really need everybody involved.

So I think it's going to be a lot easier going forward, dealing with bringing those issues to the table.

Mr. Mike Lake: I think it's important that we, as a society, start to look at these cases as an opportunity rather than as charity.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

I have a quick question for you, Mr. Cardozo. In terms of the national qualifications framework and foreign credentials, are there any countries that do something similar to that right now that you'd recommend as a model to us in Canada?

We talk about our foreign credentials program and getting that set up, and you guys talk about doing not only that, but going a little further in terms of recognizing qualifications and setting that kind of framework up. Do you have any thoughts on that? Are there any countries that are doing this well or doing this already?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: From what I understand, the national government of Australia has addressed the issue and has something like an agency of this kind. So that's one of the areas to look at.

What I'd like to do is send you a report that we just put out called *Who Does What in FCR?*, in foreign credential recognition. It's a fairly brief report, but it outlines the vast number of agencies, governments, non-governmental agencies, and educational institutions that are currently involved in the process.

I think if this new agency starts with just being a referral service, that will be a huge help. If it goes on and does more, there are those sorts of opportunities. But given the web of players across the country, if there's any system that can make it easier for the newcomer, I think that'll be a huge help.

The Chair: Mr. Swinwood, go ahead, please.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: I have just a quick comment on that one. I have a staff member in Lisbon today at the world meeting about internationally educated professionals and their transfer, and about how people are recognized and their credentials are recognized. So we have some work going on right now to see which of the countries—and I understand 160 countries out of the 188 countries in the world—are trying to figure out what to do as either suppliers or receivers of IEPs.

The Chair: Great.

Mr. Cardozo, if you could give that to the clerk at some point, that'd be great. We'll make sure it gets distributed to all the members on the committee.

Yes, Mr. Hébert.

Mr. Paul Hébert: I'd also point to Australia. I know that for the mining industry, Australia is a major player. They've been quite

aggressive with their immigration policy, and FCR factors into that. It's not only foreign credentials, but also foreign competency. We, as well, are taking a very close look at what's going on there and what's working and what's not. We have some information we could get to you through Andrew, and we will have more to come.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to the next round, then, which will be five minutes. We have Mr. Valley up for that.

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the presentation.

I was encouraged to hear from Mr. Cardozo that for more than two decades the federal government, regardless of the stripe of the political party, has been working on this issue. I guess we're all here to figure out how we make it work better.

My questions will be about mining, or will be in that vein. We identified future trends and what happens with tremendous demands or rapid demands on our short-term cycle. I'll use my own riding as an example.

In northwestern Ontario we have huge potential, thanks to some of the activity in mining right now through flow-through shares. Everyone's working. It's a good program in an area of huge unemployment. My riding is the eighth largest in Canada. There are about 250,000 square kilometres. They have no roads. They have more remote sites than any other place in Canada. I'm talking about remote first nations communities.

There are going to be job opportunities there. We can look at the Victor Lake site right now and at how we get those populations ready to participate. They're 85% to 90% unemployed at this point. We have a different culture. We have areas of Canada that most people don't realize have just started to see vehicles in the last couple of decades, just got TV 25 years ago, just got airports so they can land planes year-round not very long ago. This is a huge culture shock.

Mr. Swinwood mentioned grade 11 and grade 12, but there are no high schools in these areas. They have elementary schools. Some now—the large communities—are getting the ability to have high schools. In most places they use remote high schools.

So how do we look to the future to realize there are going to be a lot of jobs? They may be short-term, 5-, 10-, or 15-year jobs, but how do we involve the people who live there?

• (1205)

Mr. Paul Hébert: There's no question that the industry is cyclical and we are in the midst of the boom portion of the cycle. The consensus seems to be that this boom will be prolonged, but it will inevitably come to an end.

There is a huge opportunity right now given the success that the mining sector is experiencing and given its close proximity to aboriginal communities in northern Ontario and, in fact, across Canada's north, where you have some 1,200 aboriginal communities within 200 kilometres of a mine site.

There are some specific initiatives being undertaken. De Beers, for example, at its Victor project, with JBET, the James Bay employment and training partnership, is delivering training directly to the community. Despite the cyclical nature of the industry, with the development of occupational standards, what workers get are transferrable skills that can be recognized by employers in other sectors when the downturn does come. Again, those occupational standards give that mobility and the opportunity for continued meaningful employment.

Mr. Roger Valley: One of the things someone mentioned was the mobility of the workforce. I can think of nothing better than a mobile workforce trained that will be prepared to move across the country when the downturn comes. But I'm particularly concerned.

I think you used De Beers as an example, as they're involved in that. They have the site, they're actually participating in education, but what they've done to fit in more employees—and I want your thoughts on this—is that they've downgraded many of the positions. I'm not sure if I'm using the right term, but what they've said is, say there are 600 people who are going to be working at this site—I'm just using a number; I don't know what it is—and 50 of those people do not have to have a high school education. What they've said now is, considering the workforce there, with the amount of work they can do now, 125 don't need a high school education.

What can we do in that field? How can we provide the high school education in those areas for the people above the 125, the 475 people who are going to be involved? We know we're not going to get all the engineers and highly skilled trades out of there, but how do we start that process now?

De Beers started early. They had a few setbacks, mainly because of red tape. But how do we start that now, considering that there could be thousands of jobs in northern Ontario that no one is educated for at this point? So how do we get going now?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Again, I would point to occupational standards and partnerships with post-secondary education. I think it's a good thing that the requirements were changed to allow more people to gain access to that labour market. However, it shouldn't be capped there.

With the standards and an understanding of the progression through various careers within an industry, it gives the employer and the education system the information they need to provide incremental training—that is, on-the-job training, or even return to school *en alternance* with work terms—so that people, specifically aboriginal people, can access those higher levels of employment.

It's definitely a challenge where the aboriginal community is concerned. There are, in some cases, very high levels of aboriginal employment, but they're mostly spread across one stratum of employment.

Mr. Roger Valley: When De Beers takes in 125 people—and again, it's just a number—who are prepared to work but they don't have a high school education, are there any government programs or is there any thought to the future, where we support them, like apprenticeships, to get the education while they're on-site? Is there anything like that we can do?

Mr. Paul Hébert: I'm not aware of a specific program, but I think it's a real opportunity, whereby the workers could access a GED, for example, and complete that while they're on the job.

• (1210)

Mr. Roger Valley: With government support, working with a company?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Exactly, where an infusion of federal and or provincial dollars could leverage employer investment.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Swinwood, for 10 seconds.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Industry Canada has a program called First Nations SchoolNet, to connect through broadband all the aboriginal communities. That is one way we can get the education, curriculum, and everything to these remote communities. It's an excellent program and it should be continued.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Swinwood.

We're going to move to Mr. Lessard for five minutes.

It's all yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to thank our witnesses for joining us this morning. Their testimony has been highly informative and will help us a great deal to prepare our report.

I'd like to focus first on the mining sector. I grew up in Abitibi, a mining region, in a family of mine workers. There's one aspect of this job that you haven't touched on and I have to wonder why that is so. Mining is physically demanding work.

We hear a lot of talk about qualifications. People must be trained in order to work in the mines. A rather startling fact is that half of mine workers are between the ages of 40 and 54. Therefore, we're dealing with an older workforce that may not be so easy to replace.

Mining presents some physical demands. Furthermore, many mines use archaic equipment. For instance, some mining operations still use jack hammers, which can be very hard on a person's back. It's quite an achievement if a miner working underground manages to reach the age of fifty. Moreover, the accident and mortality rate is among the highest for mine workers. This reality needs to be acknowledged.

In your opinion, are the physical demands of mining a contributing factor to the shortage of workers of this sector? If so, what steps are being considered to mitigate these demands in order to attract young people to the mining profession? A mine can only operate if the ore can be extracted. Extracting ore is the most important job in the mining sector, in my estimation.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Indeed, the problem is the perception that mining is physically very demanding and low tech work. That may have been true in the past. There will always be very demanding professions. I for one would have been hard pressed to operate a jack hammer and drill support weighing 100 or 125 lbs.

However, major technological advances have been made over the last 20 to 30 years and these have radically changed the nature of the work and the physical effort demanded of mine workers.

You also mentioned the mortality rate. It has declined substantially. The mining sector no longer boasts one of the highest mortality rates among workers. However, you have raised an important point. This perception is an impediment to recruiting workers. Young people see the profession in a certain way, but this is truer still in the case of their parents, the ones who influence to a greater extent the choices young people make.

Our challenge is to provide educators, parents and young people with the real facts so that they can make enlightened choices.

I'm not saying that any one particular sector should be touted. I'm simply saying that we should tell it like it is so that young people know exactly what to expect. We're not denying that the job is physically demanding, but we're also saying that it is high tech work and mining operations once done underground are now being conducted above ground.

• (1215)

Mr. Yves Lessard: Still on the subject of mining in the Abitibi, it's a fact that jack drills are still used to this day to extract the ore.

Mr. Swinwood, it seems to me that some kind of alliance can be formed to develop mining technology. What's being done in this area? You've stated that this situation has greatly evolved—I do respect your opinion—but if we compare the mining sector with other economic sectors, it's clear that it is by no means in the forefront of technology.

Are certain initiatives under way or are sector officials simply content to say that this situation has improved?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Many R & D activities are under way. The mining sector has one of the highest R & D budgets. I'm quite certain officials never feel that they have reached their goal. Research efforts are ongoing. The latest technology must always be used. Deposits are located ever further underground and new technologies are needed to extract the ore. Laurentian University in the Sudbury region has established a partnership with the industry. Corporations such as MIRARCO and CAMIRO spend substantial amounts of money to ensure that the best technologies are available to mining companies.

[English]

The Chair: We're going to move on to the next question from Madam Savoie.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Employee recruitment and retention are a function of job security and job quality. I'd like to know what Sector Councils are doing to create good jobs.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Certainly, retention, with the view to life-long learning, is one of the main issues we've been addressing. One of the things we want to enhance in the country is a culture of learning. As technology speeds ahead, it's important to make sure

that your employees also move ahead. This way they feel part of the workforce and have full access to advancement within an office or factory. So retention and life-long learning are issues that are addressed quite widely, as is the issue of essential skills.

There was a question earlier about literacy. The whole package of essential skills is important: literacy, numeracy, computer use, and soft skills like the ability to analyze documents and work with others. All of these things work towards people doing better in the workplace, staying there and making their maximum contribution.

Ms. Denise Savoie: What should the government's role be? Some people have called for a national strategy on life-long learning that would address the issues you've talked about, with an interface between different government levels and the councils. How would you see the development of such a strategy?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: There are parts in place at the moment. Consider the essential skills strategy, which includes nine different skills: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use, and continuous learning.

With sector councils, we encourage the industries to put in place—at the factory, office, or mine level—an essential skills strategy that encourages people to learn to do all those things. In a modern workplace you need to be literate, but you also need to be proficient in the other skills I mentioned.

• (1220)

Ms. Denise Savoie: So going back to those skills you identified, take me through the steps. I'm an employee in a mine, so what's the process, what's the access, what's the encouragement? How does the program work on the ground?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: In trucking, for example, the trucking council works with its employers to make sure they have the necessary skills. They may have people driving trucks who are not literate. They certainly have people who don't have the ability to use computers. Today, virtually every occupation requires some level of computer use. So they provide employees with classes to bring them up to speed.

I'll give you another example. The CARS Council, the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council, has satellite-delivered courses at places like Canadian Tire or Joe's Garage. Employers can spend perhaps three hours going through a particular training module. I understand Jennifer Steeves of the CARS Council will be here on Thursday. She'll be happy to provide you with a lot more information.

These are just two examples.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So is that time the employer gives to the employee?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Good point; that's a very key point. By providing the training in the workplace, through satellite delivery or Internet delivery, it becomes a lot easier for the employer to allow the employee to take that training during work hours. For a lot of people, especially people with young kids, it's not easy to do an evening course on top of a day's work.

So yes, part of this whole strategy is to encourage employers to do that training or to allow workers to take that training during work hours, or paid hours.

Ms. Denise Savoie: You referred earlier to the importance of labour market information being provided to universities, schools, and so on. How would you evaluate the labour market information that exists now, that's provided federally?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: It's pretty good, but it's quite general at this point. A number of different surveys are involved if you're talking about the whole package of labour market information.

I hate to say it comes down to money, but in some sense, it does.

Ms. Denise Savoie: It always does.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: If you want to get a sense of how many geologists you need in Victoria, or in Saskatoon, Statistics Canada at the moment can only tell you how many geologists we need in Canada. If you want to get it down to, say, mining in Saskatoon, it becomes a lot harder to get that granularity of information unless you do a much larger survey.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So that isn't available now.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: It's available in a few sectors. In tourism, for example, they have a satellite account with Statistics Canada. For the very big sectors, Statistics Canada is able to deliver, but not for the medium-sized and small.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

The Chair: That's all the time we have for that question. We're going to move to the last questioner of the second round.

Mr. Storseth, five minutes, please.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank these gentlemen for coming forward and putting forth such succinct and intelligent arguments.

In our country, we have, I believe, the best learning institutions in the world. When you look at some of our universities—Acadia, St. Francis Xavier, the University of Alberta—and even some of our technical training schools—NAIT, for example, and SAIT—they are very advanced across the world. But one of the criticisms I've heard of some of these schools is that they have an inability to quickly change their curriculums to adapt to the needs of industry, needs that industry is currently facing, in some senses.

I would actually ask all three of you to take the time to answer this question. What role do you see some of the private colleges, such as the ones represented by the National Association of Career Colleges, playing when it comes to labour shortages in your sectors?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Maybe I can start.

Mr. Storseth, you mentioned that we made “intelligent and succinct” comments. I'm going to ask you to give my teenage kids a call and tell them that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: When I talk to them about careers, they tell me I don't make any sense at all.

With regard to colleges, one of the interesting things that sector councils developed with the ACCC, the Association of Community Colleges of Canada, was a series of what are called affinity groups. They developed an affinity group with each one of our sectors. It included deans and instructors and professors and so forth from across the country. For example, there's one dealing with mining, another dealing with high-tech issues, and so forth.

That is a process where teachers and deans and all these folks in colleges from across the country work with the sector council to create a close link between what they're teaching and what the employers are looking for. This has developed over the last few years, and fairly well.

I think this works well with the colleges because they are set up to be more job-oriented. As we mentioned, we also have some of that going on with high schools. The problem we have at the moment is with universities. The problem with universities is that they don't quite see themselves as being that job-oriented. There is still a sense of being involved in higher learning. Some faculties, such as business, are much more job-oriented, but we haven't been able to strike that kind of relationship with the universities.

I would hope that NAIT and SAIT are moving in the right direction. Certainly they work with a number of our councils.

● (1225)

Mr. Paul Hébert: The affinity group model is working well. In mining, we're fortunate in that we have a relatively smaller number of institutions to deal with compared to, say, IT. We have nine universities and some seventeen community colleges and institutes of technology. That's a manageable group with which industry can communicate, exchange, and try to make sure they're as responsive as possible.

But there's not only the fact that it's onerous to change curriculum rapidly, there's the technological change and the need to have the equipment in situ for the students to work on. Sometimes we're talking about million-dollar pieces of equipment or more, so there's a need to foster the relationship between employers and individual schools, but also to make sure that those partnerships are happening within the context of the pan-Canadian reality of the industry so that the skills do remain transferable.

And it can happen even before the post-secondary level. One example is a pilot project that's happening in Ontario right now, called the Ontario specialist high skills major. One of the pilots is in Sudbury, for mining, whereby a student gets his or her secondary school diploma, but some of the training takes place at the worksite and is delivered by the employer, and the student is credited for that training. Pending the results of that pilot project, our council will be looking to roll out that kind of initiative. The next logical choice would probably be Quebec in terms of the importance of mining. It's something that we're considering, along with the *conseil sectoriel* in Quebec. That is a natural lead-in to a more efficient link between the post-secondary system and industry's needs.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: From the high-tech side of it, our affinity group with ACCC involves 110 colleges across Canada.

Our last meeting in May also included the NACC representatives of the private colleges that are also delivering IT-oriented training. We looked at five different issues at that meeting. It was a very constructive, very interesting day. At the college level, and even at the private college level, we're very pleased with how it's working.

At the university level, we have to work individually with each university. We've had significant success in changing the computer science curriculum at Dalhousie, where they have now introduced a bachelor of informatics—rather than just computer science—in partnership with the commerce department, in partnership with the health department, and in partnership, I believe, with the environment department. This was approved in July by the senate, the course started in September, and 48% of the enrolment is female. So we can have an impact, but systemic change doesn't happen overnight.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you.

I have one more quick question, actually directed more toward the mining industry.

We know there are some severe shortages out there right now. What is the degree of worker mobility within the sector? More importantly, are you able to tap into some of the sectors that have experienced a downturn, like forestry?

• (1230)

Mr. Paul Hébert: The degree of mobility varies by occupation. Professional occupations tend to be more mobile, with the exception of geoscientists, geophysicists, who are regulated provincially. They need to be licensed within that province to do work. A lot of the times, these contracts are a few days long to conduct their work, so they have to go through a process that costs hundreds of dollars and weeks, only to work for a few days. In other occupations where there are Red Seal trades, there is a greater degree of mobility. For example, engineers are very mobile. In some of the production occupations, it's there to a lesser extent.

We are taking a very close look at the skills inventories of workers in some segments of forestry and in the manufacturing sector, to map out their skills and where the gaps might be in the envelope of skills required in mining. It's under way right now. Intuitively, I would say it looks very good, and we should be able to get a good number of those people into the workplace much more quickly than if they had come from somewhere else.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're now going to move to Mr. Murphy, for five minutes.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

I have one issue I want to get a comment on, and that is the issue of the old worker. When I read all the material, there seems to be a very common thread: that there's a looming demographic time bomb facing Canada, not only in your industries, but in every industry. I believe the birth rate is 1.41 now, or two-thirds of replacement.

A lot of the talk about immigration, foreign credentials, and participation rates with disabled people and aboriginal people is really nibbling around the edges. I see we've going to have a major problem here.

One of the issues I see and want to get your comments on, as to government policy and the older workers, is retirement age through government programs. CPP was reduced to 60, and labour benefits were reduced in retirement age. It's been driven down by about four or four and a half years. The average age used to be 65, now it's down around 60, I believe.

This is one issue—and not the only one—the government has to look at, and I want to get your comments. As an example, regarding tax policy, we have a shortage that has been described here by you people and the questioners—restaurants in Alberta and other places. Probably there are retired people getting the guaranteed income supplement who would love to work part-time and make a couple of hundred dollars a week. But if they do, they get a dollar-for-dollar reduction on their government benefit package, and that is causing problems. We are a healthier society.

Do your councils have any specific recommendations to government to deal with the whole issue of participation rates for the 60- to 70-year-old cohort? I know for some of you in the IT sector it's not as relevant, but it is relevant in other industries, such as the tourism industry, which is facing a crisis. It's probably not relevant to the mining industry, but it is relevant to other sector councils, and Mr. Cardozo would know them.

Mr. Paul Hébert: The issue of older workers is a very important one in mining, because of the facts I gave you in my opening remarks. The term “older workers” in mining tends to include people who wouldn't otherwise be considered older workers, because we have people retiring between 50 and 55, after 30 years of service, who are not ready to retire completely.

Companies are becoming more and more flexible in terms of how they accommodate these people. The remark I make when I'm addressing groups of miners is that there's always a preponderance of 55-year-old white guys in the room. That's with all due respect to 55-year-old white guys, because I hope to be one some day.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

A voice: Many years hence.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Not that many.

There's certainly a need, and employers are beginning to meet the need to be flexible in accommodating those older workers. There may be other opportunities in flexibility to make it more worthwhile for workers to go back and apply the 20-some years of knowledge, on average.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Again, I'm looking for government policy recommendations. Don't forget we dropped the CPP back from 65 to 60 several years ago. That's helped early retirement, and we have a lot of tax issues for government benefits that penalize low-income people who work. I'm talking about people getting guaranteed income, for example, the guaranteed income supplement. If anyone makes any money, there's a dollar-for-dollar loss. So there's absolutely no incentive to go to work.

• (1235)

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: If you're asking whether I think we should take the CPP back up to 65, I don't want to touch that one.

I guess most provinces have dropped the mandatory retirement age, so that allows some people to work beyond 65 who want to. I think incentives are the way to go to allow people to work at least part-time if they want to, and many people who retire early do want to work part-time. So incentives through the tax or any other system help.

What we're facing is not only fewer people in the workforce when they retire, but also a huge loss of expertise and the knowledge that goes with them. But after all that is said and done, Mr. Murphy, I have to say that all we're doing is putting off the problem by five to ten years or so. We still have a bigger demographic problem looming down the road. It's interesting that 10 to 20 years ago, the issue was how do we get people out of the workforce to make way for more people to come in. Now we've turned around and said no, stay; but we've all decided we want to retire early.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: As someone who's on a Freedom 99 plan, I'd be very interested in seeing what your guaranteed income supplement and everything is. I'm already eligible for some of these things but have decided not to take them because I'm having too much fun at work. So one of the issues is putting a work environment in place where those of us who are mature workers can continue to contribute without being penalized.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to Mr. Brown for five minutes.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to split my time with Lynne. I'll start off, though.

Coming from Ontario—I did hear some mention of B.C. and Alberta—could you touch upon the skills shortages you're noticing

in Ontario and what that region of the country is facing? Secondly, I'm interested in interprovincial mobility problems that any of you three may have noticed within your respective sectors.

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: Perhaps I can start.

In Ontario, the manufacturing sector, whether it's some of the councils that we have, such as the plastics sector, the wood manufacturing sector, is certainly hurting. The plastics sector across Canada, I think, is over 60% located within an hour's drive of the GTA, so people in your riding and in those areas who would be working within that sector are certainly facing shortages.

Policing is another one across the country. The Prime Minister has mentioned that he wants to see the RCMP increased by a large number of people. That's going to be tough to make. The Ottawa Police recently announced that it wants to hire 130 or so by the end of this calendar year. It's going to be really tough to find those people across the country, so as much as we need and want them in places like Toronto or Ottawa, it's going to be tough.

Most sectors, except for perhaps the fisheries sector, are members of our council and have considerable membership within Ontario. I can't think of many that are not facing shortages here.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Certainly the mining sector in Ontario, Ontario being the province with the most mining activity of any across the country, is facing those shortages. The priority areas in our sector would be engineers, geoscientists, and tradespeople. Some segments of the manufacturing sector are experiencing a downturn, so again are looking to those to try to offset.

I spoke to mobility issues in terms of some occupations being very mobile while others are not at all, and I'll go back to it again. That's an issue that can be addressed by developing and applying occupational standards. That way employers and institutions from across the country speak the same language in training and recognizing the credentials and competencies of workers.

•(1240)

Mr. Paul Swinwood: One of the issues we're observing is that a lot of the downturn in the manufacturing sector is again impacting a sector that has been, I would say, first in and last out, so a lot of the people who are losing their jobs in the manufacturing sector are not looking for other work. They are people already in their late fifties, early fifties, and have enough of a package, given the early retirement plan support that they're getting. A lot of them entered the manufacturing sector with only a high school education, if they were lucky. They used to walk down the road from their high school and start work at the plant, and of course their family—you know, dad worked there, Uncle George worked there, Aunt Mary worked there, and everybody else worked there. So in a lot of cases the people who are coming out need significant education or significant training to be re-employed, so there's a major challenge in looking at the demographics of the people who are suffering from the layoffs and how to get them into other employment.

I would suggest that if we have anything, support for significant re-skilling would be needed to get those people re-employed, much longer than a six-week or seven-day training course.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): I have one quick question. You mentioned that you have nine universities as members of your sector council, nine universities.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Yes, I mentioned there were nine universities that offer mining engineering in Canada.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I was thinking it was part of your sector councils. I was just wondering why Arctic universities are not a part of your presentation. Given the uniqueness of being a circumpolar university, that they're hooked up around the globe, I wonder why you're not aggressively trying to get them in your sector councils. Or are you?

Mr. Andrew Cardozo: I think a number of councils will have academics from various universities who will be on their boards. I'm not sure there are many universities per se that are actually part of sector councils.

Paul Hébert has mentioned some of these universities they've worked through. Our hope was that we could work through the AUCC, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, which is the counterpart to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, and that has been a really efficient working relationship. The AUCC is structured differently and doesn't really deal with services to its members, so we're going to have to develop relationships with individual universities—and that is happening. I wouldn't classify that as aggressive; I'd like to classify it as aggressive, but we're not there yet.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I'm surprised that when you talk about mining you don't mention Saskatchewan. Why? It certainly is on the map when it comes to uranium, it's the biggest and the best in the world as far as supply of potash, and diamonds are coming. So I'm just wondering whether there is a problem with Saskatchewan when it comes to our laws and regulations. Definitely mobility is a problem, because we didn't get on-board with Alberta and B.C., so obviously mobility is almost the opposite problem that Alberta and B.C. have addressed, but we haven't.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Saskatchewan figures in a major way in all of our work, in all of our research, for a number of reasons. As you said, they're global leaders in potash and uranium production, and there are also some very bright lights in terms of aboriginal inclusion. Cameco and COGEMA, in fact, were the subject of an in-depth case study that's now being promoted to the rest of the Canadian mining industry as an exemplary model.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Would you forward a copy of that? If you're using it as an example, I'd like a copy of it.

As well, Mr. Cardozo, I'd like your notes.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Absolutely.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Very good. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, that's all the time we have, as we have to move on to some other business.

I do want to thank the gentlemen at the end of the table again for taking time to come in. As you have noted before, this is something this committee has undertaken in terms of a study. We feel it's important. We realize it's a huge issue as we move forward in this country. We want to thank you for enlightening us a little more on this issue as we go forward to make recommendations to the government when we're done this study sometime, hopefully, depending on how many motions keep coming forward, either at the end of this year or maybe sometime in 2008. Anyway, we'll keep moving forward.

Thank you very much, again, for taking the time today. Have a great afternoon.

Mr. Paul Swinwood: Thank you.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Thank you.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering why the police sector representation isn't here today. I was really looking forward to hearing it. I have some ideas for them.

•(1245)

The Chair: They asked to come back at a later point in time, so they will be back.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: You don't know when?

The Chair: We'll have to talk to the clerk and find out when it would work in the schedule.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: It's very important that I have them here.

The Chair: All right.

In terms of moving on in our agenda to other business, we are in the committee business now. We have a couple of motions before us.

Mr. Martin, your motion was put forward on Tuesday. Would you like to speak to the motion, then, and we'll have more discussion.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Yes, I'd like to move my motion.

Given the extraordinary nature of the cuts to the Department of Human Resources and Social Development and the impact that will have on all of our communities across the country as we try to provide particularly for those who are most at risk and vulnerable—the cuts to the voluntary sector, for example—and the impact it will have on the hearings we're having here of employability when you look at literacy and youth employment programs, I think it's imperative that we suspend our activity for a time and have the minister come before us. I noticed this morning a notice went out that the minister is actually coming on the Tuesday after we come back, which fits nicely with this.

I think it's also imperative that we have before us departmental heads, so that we can speak to them directly about the impacts on their budgets, and what they can deliver, and how they feel about that, and to the groups themselves in our communities who are going to have to manage this reduction in funding as they try to provide the service that they're committed to.

That said, I would like to move the motion.

The Chair: Do we have any other comments?

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'm a bit concerned about the idea that we would hold off on the study we're doing right now, which is really important. I think everybody around the table recognizes the importance of the employability study. Some of the things we learned today are a perfect example of why we're doing this. I'm not sure how long we would be derailing what we're trying to do here.

How long are we talking about, in terms of what you're suggesting? How long would this motion take?

Mr. Tony Martin: I would like to see us have a day with the departmental heads and a day with the groups who have been affected. We're probably talking about three days of committee hearings.

Mr. Mike Lake: Three at least. We would also need to include as part of the discussion our talking to representatives of Canadians who would be adversely affected. You talk about the adverse effects of the cuts, but what about the adverse effects of ineffective government spending? There may be some people on the other side who want to speak to that as well.

Mr. Tony Martin: Well, move a motion to that effect. That's not my motion.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: To keep it consistent—we're on employability, which was certainly.... The author of this motion was quite excited that he had gotten employability on the table. We're on a roll after this morning with those witnesses. I thought we'd get lost, that you'd get this interrupted. We'd be going on a totally different topic, on a different wavelength. Doesn't it seem better to be consistent and keep on with what we're doing with our witnesses? Then we can prepare beforehand.

As you can see, we were all very prepared today for our speakers. I thought the questions were really good; there was excellent dialogue. When it comes to studying, I always envision that committees should be engaged and focused on the topic at hand. We

have started this; it was very important to everyone on this committee. I'm just wondering why we aren't staying on it.

Three meetings is a lot, considering that we want to have this wrapped up at Christmas, and in between, we have the minister coming. As you've said, she has agreed...I'm not sure; I didn't notice that notice. I'm just wondering why we wouldn't want to stay where we are, and that is focused on this.

• (1250)

The Chair: I have Mr. Regan, Mr. Lessard, and then Mr. Brown.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that literacy groups and others who've been affected by these cuts were going along fine, albeit that they were struggling with various things and could use more funding. But all of a sudden they're facing dramatic cuts and are not going along fine anymore. This urgent situation has been created by the decision of the government—not by members of this committee, certainly.

I think it is an important enough matter that it does call for us to interrupt our work. Frankly, I would hope that members from all sides would want to assist in putting pressure on the government to rescind this decision and reinstate the funding for these important programs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Regan.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, in life, emergencies sometimes arise. In my opinion, this is an emergency. We need to establish some priorities and I think this qualifies as one. The committee has decided to travel to hold consultations on employability.

When a bridge is on the verge of collapsing, we stop to see what can be done to prevent that from happening. For women's groups, literacy groups, support workers at volunteer centres and aboriginals, the bridge is about to collapse. Are we going to stop and ask ourselves how we can shore it up, or are we going to continue on our way, as if nothing had happened?

I'm surprised by the arguments put forward by our colleagues opposite. I've often heard them make some very rational comments about these groups with a view to assisting them. I know the government is poised to make some cuts and that these colleagues are members of that government, but in life, it's important to distinguish between decisions in the public interest, and those that are not. In this case, we must act together in the public interest. We need to stop and see what we can do for these groups to prevent the bridge from falling down.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lessard.

Mr. Brown is next.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Chairman, first, what are you removing from our docket by doing this—I'm not sure there's any guidance you can give us on that—and how is it going to adversely affect our schedule? Would it have any effect on the planned travel the committee has, in terms of the work the clerk has already done there? Additionally, has there been any attention paid to which witnesses we would be unable to hear from if we added new stuff onto the plate?

The Chair: I think we would leave the travel that has been booked in place and we'd have to work around some other dates that we have. What ends up happening then is that we put off some things, as Mr. Martin has mentioned. Instead of having the study done in the fall, we may have to go into the new year and do things like that.

We've already moved a couple of things around. I know we're looking at the social economy and poverty on October 31 and November 2; that's been scheduled. We put off employability after that. We will have to look at the schedule and work with the clerk to try to figure out how this would work.

Mr. Brown is next.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Subsequently, then, if we push employability into the new year, how does that affect the schedule for the new year?

The Chair: Once again, the committee is master of its own destiny. That just means that other things we were going to look at will have to fall into place in due course. Once again, you ladies and gentlemen decide the direction we take the committee in; it's part of what we do.

We've got Mr. Lake, and then Ms. Yelich and Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Mike Lake: Speaking to Mr. Lessard's comment, I agree. You're saying the things we're studying are inconsistent with what some of us have said in this committee. I think the work we're doing is extremely important, and the funds we're putting towards these things mean nothing if they're being spent ineffectively or inefficiently. One of the members used the word “devastating”; we're not talking about devastating cuts here. Let's look at this in perspective. We're talking about becoming more effective and more efficient in terms of what we're doing, so that we'll actually have a real impact on the things we're working on. We're working on an employability study; we want to have an impact on employability. What we're talking about, with the cuts that we're talking about, is becoming more effective, more efficient.

I don't know if this is the right time to move an amendment. I would move an amendment that we add a bullet that says, “and representatives of Canadians adversely affected by ineffective and inefficient government spending”, because if we're going to bring certain people into the room from one side, we have to have all views represented. I would move that amendment.

You want it in writing? Okay.

Can I move one small separate amendment as well? I'll do the other one first.

•(1255)

The Chair: While Mr. Lake is doing that, we'll clarify what that amendment is.

I've got Ms. Yelich, Mr. Storseth, and then Mr. Lessard.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I certainly understand that we have an urgency here, but everything has been urgent. We're dealing with the poverty issue, so we've put that on the table. This expenditure review was under the previous government, and it had already been started. It's not a big shock that some of these programs probably may have been expecting this anyhow, because before we became government, we had literacy groups coming in asking us about their funding. I don't know if it is as critical as.... I'm very anxious to get this study done on employability, especially after hearing today's witnesses expressing that we're at crisis level. I'd like to see a little time on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

Mr. Storseth is next.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I feel obligated to express my disappointment with this motion and with the NDP. We agreed to undertake the study on the social economy and poverty; that's something I voted for because I thought it was important. Now we have this motion coming up, and I'd like Mr. Martin to address why the NDP is filibustering on something that is very important and very crucial for us to look at—the issue of employability and labour shortages in this country. It is extremely exasperating and it is affecting my riding in my province of Alberta. The notion I get from all the witnesses we bring before us is that this issue is very important all across this country and, I would venture to guess, in the ridings of the members themselves.

Why is the NDP so intent on filibustering this study?

The Chair: Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, let me first remind you that this committee was not consulted, even though we're talking about significant cuts that directly affect our work.

I'd like to propose an amendment to change some aspects of Mr. Martin's motion. The proposed changes are in line with Mr. Lake's comments, namely that the committee should hear from those affected by these cuts, and that is shouldn't necessarily wait until after the cuts have been made.

I'm not sure if the English version gives another impression, but the motion in French reads as follows:

Que, considérant les compressions du gouvernement at DRHDC annoncées le 25 septembre 2005, que le Comité convoque immédiatement devant le Comité : - la Ministre, pour expliquer les motifs derrière ces compressions [...]

I would propose the following instead: “-la Ministre, pour qu'elle explique les motifs derrière ces compressions[...]”.

It's a question of meaning. Basically, the essence of the motion remains the same.

Point two of motion continues thusly:

- le personnel du ministère, pour expliquer l'impact de ces compressions [...]

Here, I would suggest the following wording: “-le personnel du ministère, pour qu'il explique l'impact de ces compressions[...]”

The motion concludes with the following:

- et des individus et des organisations touchés par ces compressions.

I propose that the following be substituted: “- et des individus et des organismes touchés par ces compressions, pour qu'ils expriment leur opinion face à ces compressions.”

• (1300)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

The clerk informs me that it doesn't need to be an amendment. It's just cleaning up the language, and we'll do that and we'll take care of that. Thank you for pointing that out.

Mr. Martin, did you want to comment?

Mr. Tony Martin: Yes, since it's past one o'clock, I'd like to move the question.

The Chair: Okay.

We need to deal with the amendment, and I'm going to read the amendment to you right now. So it would be adding one more bullet: “and representatives of Canadians adversely affected by ineffective and inefficient government spending”.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask a question of the committee, and I guess the mover of the motion. Would he be willing to roll in his previous motion of the social economy initiative, so we can tackle this all at once and get it out of the way? Is that a possibility?

The Chair: These are separate motions, so they've got to be dealt with separately.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): And we're on the amendment.

The Chair: We're on the amendment right now. Let's deal with the amendment.

What's that?

An hon. member: He wants to know if it's every Canadian we're inviting.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Chairman, the social economy issue does mean this. It is part of...

The Chair: This is a separate motion right now. Right now we're dealing with the amendment that has been proposed.

Some hon. members: Question.

The Chair: Monsieur Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The vote has been called. There is no debate.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, that's what I'm doing right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Then we should vote.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to call for the vote now, if the committee is ready, on the—

Mr. Mike Lake: I just want to suggest one word. It's minor, but I think it would be more properly worded “and representatives of organizations”, on that last bullet point that's on Mr. Martin's motion. It should be “representatives”, not “individuals”. It would be clearer.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: And “earliest possible convenience”.

The Clerk of the Committee: Can you read it?

Mr. Mike Lake: So basically his last bullet point, not the one I added, would say, “and representatives of organizations adversely affected by those cuts”.

Hon. Geoff Regan: We're talking one day, so we aren't going to have everybody in Canada, so—

Mr. Mike Lake: I know, but it's clearer and more proper. Right?

The Chair: I'm going to go back to the motion. Are we ready to vote on the amendment?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: No. The social economy issue is this issue. It can be. It is part of it; this is a social economy issue.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: We called for a vote on the amendment as presented. This is another thought, which could be presented after.

The Chair: Sure, fair enough. That's fair enough, but still, once again, if we're ready to vote on this.... I just want to make sure there's no more debate. If there's no more debate, we will call the question and we can address that as a separate issue.

Okay, then, all those in favour of the amendment?

Mr. Mike Lake: My amendment?

The Chair: Your amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, I request a recorded division.

[English]

The Chair: Sure, that's fine.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, which amendment are we voting on? He can't move an amendment, as there is already one on the table.

[English]

The Chair: This was the amendment that was proposed by Mr. Lake to add additional bullets.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I didn't understand that.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lessard, your proposal was not an amendment; it was to clean up the language, which we are going to do. I'm sorry if I didn't communicate that. It was not written properly in French, and it will be taken care of and noted. We did not need an amendment because it was actually indicating what the English already said.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: They've agreed to it. Correct?

[*English*]

The Chair: So it's fine. It was accepted.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4)

The Chair: Now we will go back to the original motion by Mr. Martin. There will be a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 0 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Mr. Regan, you can deal with the second motion now.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I move my motion, Mr. Chair. Do you require more than that?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Regan's motion is in front of you. Is there any discussion on this?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I think the study that has just been proposed can be part of social economy. I want to go back to motions. We should have probably rescinded the motion Ms. Brown put forward a while ago, because we are being interrupted by motions. Now we have another motion on the table today. Are we spending all of our time on motions? Can we rescind Ms. Brown's motion?

The Chair: Because the second motion has been moved, we need to deal with that first. We will come back and deal with that issue right after we've done this.

Hon. Geoff Regan: The motion before the committee at the moment doesn't require us to spend a lot of time. It's pretty clear and straightforward, and I think we can either pass or defeat it right now.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on that, or are we ready to call the vote?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: We have motions on the table as well and we haven't considered any of them. We now have two motions on the table. Ms. Brown made a motion a while ago to put a halt to these motions so we could study employability, which was very important to everybody. This study can be rolled into social economy; the literacy cuts are part of the social economy issue.

The Chair: Ms. Brown.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Yes, of course we would all like to proceed with the study that was agreed upon. Some of us weren't here when that subject was chosen as being the number one issue for HRSD. But even so, I agree with Ms. Yelich that I'd like to proceed with what has been agreed upon without the interruption of motions.

Of course, at that time, with a booming economy and a \$13 billion surplus announced for the last fiscal year, no one predicted that anybody would be bringing in cuts to programs that this committee is responsible for. Now that the boom has begun to fall, I would suggest it's only a paring knife compared to the guillotine that will fall in the next budget. I think we have to be alert to those changes, and I think that's what the movers of these motions were trying to do.

However, if in fact there is a huge concern about getting off schedule or disrupting certain witnesses, Mr. Chairman, you always have the option of calling an extra meeting on Wednesday afternoon,

which is how other chairs solve these problems. You could have one study on Tuesday and Thursday at the regular meeting times, and you could have another one that takes three or four meetings on Wednesday afternoons.

I only put that forward.

• (1310)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: There are opportunities to ask the minister about the cuts. There's going to be a committee of the whole. I believe it could be handled there.

To go back to the social economy issue, the cuts are part of it, so why can't we role it into that?

As for running parallel studies or parallel meetings, this morning we heard witnesses express that they were very pleased we are studying this, because it's a crisis situation.

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Chairman, I'm saying we don't have to interrupt that. We can add this very serious concern.

I have less faith in the minister's answers than in her parliamentary secretary's answers. I've been asking her questions in the House and, other than ideological responses, I haven't heard one fact come out of her mouth. I don't think we will get good answers when she comes. It's not that she's not a very nice person. She is a nice person, but she's following the party line so seriously that we can't get the facts from her.

I think we have to hear from the people affected by these cuts on what's going to happen on the ground. I completely agree.

Mr. Roger Valley: Call the question, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are there any more points of discussion?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Mr. Chair, I have a question on procedure, being a rookie here.

I have an outstanding motion that's now been there for a couple of months. As Mrs. Brown's motion moved, we all said that we'd get on with the work of the committee. But whenever a political issue of the day comes up for the opposition, their motion supercedes the motions that were already put in front of it. I'd like some clarification on that.

The Chair: Mr. Storseth, I'll only mention that the motion can be brought forward at any time to be voted on. Right now the point of discussion is on this particular motion, but those motions can be brought forward to be voted on.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: In fact, there are two motions on today's agenda: Mr. Martin's motion and Mr. Regan's motion.

Mr. Chairman, I think the committee should focus on its own mission. It presented to the minister a report containing 28 recommendations on employment insurance and every single one was rejected. If the government systematically refuses to consider our findings, we have to wonder if we are of any use at all to the House of Commons.

My other questions has to do with the decision we just made, namely to invite the minister and concerned officials to come and explain to us the reason for these cuts. I think Mr. Regan's motion should be retained, so that we have the opportunity to hear from these individuals before the cuts take effect.

I'd like to move the following amendment. I would retain the initial wording in Mr. Regan's motion, but I would propose the following, "That, in consideration of the funding cuts to announced September 25, 2006, that the Human Resources, Social Development and Status of Persons with Disabilities Committee recommend that the government continue funding all Human Resources and Social Development Canada programs and that the chair report the adoption of this motion to the House forthwith."

Otherwise, a number of files could be mismanaged. In my view, literacy programs are not the only ones deserving of our attention.

The Clerk: Ms. Lessard, I just want to be certain that I've understood you correctly. You want to replace the words "the Adult Learning and Literacy Program at the 2005-2006 level [...]" with "all Human Resources and Social Development Canada programs [...]".

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, the question arose as to whether it would be preferable to list all of the programs. I think not, because, when it comes to the cuts, some programs are not identified per se, for example, funding to women's groups. That's why I've chosen to word my motion this way. Moreover, it is consistent with the motion adopted previously by the committee. The minister will explain the cuts to us.

•(1315)

[English]

The Chair: I want to read the amendment as I understand it, just for clarification, "That, in consideration of the funding cuts to HRSDC announced September 25, 2006, the HUMA Committee recommend that the government continue funding all HRSDC programs at the 2005-2006 level and that the chair report the adoption of this motion to the House forthwith." Is that correct?

Okay, then that's the amendment.

Can I call the vote on the amendment, or do we have more discussion on that?

Yes.

Ms. Denise Savoie: I'm sorry, as a new MP, I'm not aware of the procedures, but normally shouldn't cuts like this be presented to the House for discussion, for Parliament to—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Madame Savoie, Mr. Martin is at the table, so you're not allowed to.... I apologize for that.

If there's no more discussion on the amendment, then I will call for the vote on the amendment as proposed by Monsieur Lessard.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We're going back to the main motion.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'd like to suggest an amendment. What I'd like to do is remove the words "at the 2005-2006 level" and replace them with the words "while recognizing and respecting provincial and federal responsibilities."

The Chair: Is there any discussion on this?

I will call the question on the amendment as proposed by Mr. Lake.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We're back to the main motion.

If there is no more discussion, I will call the question.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: How can we vote on something we don't have any power over—the cuts? These cuts were done by the Treasury Board.

The Chair: I would say once again it's a recommendation, and that the House can do whatever it wants with it.

If there's no more discussion, I will—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would like to ask why are we voting on these, when there are so many outstanding motions. We have a raft of them.

The Chair: We can certainly bring forward those motions at any time, most definitely.

•(1320)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I request a recorded division, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lessard has asked for a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

Ms. Bonnie Brown: Mr. Chair, I just want to make one point. I don't know why the HRSD committee has somehow become the HUMA committee. I have a feeling it has something to do with the letters used in the computers by the clerk. I feel it depersonalizes us. I am not on the HUMA committee. I want to see that out of there and the real name, the meaningful name, of this committee restored.

The Chair: Okay. We'll see what we can do.

This meeting is adjourned.

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