



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

HUMA • NUMBER 026 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, October 26, 2006

—

Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Thursday, October 26, 2006

•(1015)

[English]

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

I would like to welcome all our guests and thank them for being here.

As everyone is probably aware, we've been conducting a study on employability. That has been broad-reaching. We also are looking at seasonal work, older workers, and the whole spectrum of what affects employability in Canada. We were in St. John's, Halifax, and Montreal this week, in Toronto today, and we're heading out west in a couple of weeks. This is something that all parties unanimously agree is very important, which is why we are conducting the study moving forward.

So thank you very much for being here. We're going to give each person, each group, seven minutes to present. We're going to have a first round of questions of seven minutes, a second round of five minutes, and as long as time permits. I would ask you to try to stick to the seven minutes. I'll let you know at one minute that your time is coming to a close.

Ms. Cutler and Mr. Gleberzon, we'll start with you. Again, thank you very much for being here. It's good to see you guys.

Ms. Judy Cutler (Director, Government and Media Relations, Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus): It's good to see you too.

We'd like to thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to present our views on employability in Canada as it impacts on older workers. My colleague Bill Gleberzon and I will split the presentation today.

Members of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons are 50 and older. We have 400,000 across the country. We actually advocate on behalf of the 11 million Canadians 50 and older across the country. So this is the segment that will be our focus.

The 50-plus band is made up of two broad groups—pre-seniors, those 50 to 64; and seniors, those 65 and older. Both groups face challenges in employability. For pre-seniors, there is the common problem of finding a job in the face of employers' ageist prejudices. You may have seen recently in the media that Kelly Services reports 63% of 10,000 respondents 55 and older reporting discrimination based on age in seeking a job. This is an unfortunate reality that CARP's employment website, theskillsmatch.ca, finds regularly.

Seniors continue to face mandatory retirement in too many parts of the country, while others worry about the threat of mandatory employment. We hear from our members that many want to retire and others either want to or have to work. Clearly the traditional rocking chair image isn't even a perception now. Those who retire tend to remain active, and often are open to returning to work part time or as consultants. Those who remain in the workforce also have much to offer.

As in the rest of the world, Canada is experiencing an unprecedented demographic evolution that will see one in four Canadians 65 and older by 2030. At the same time, the current lower birth rate has already created a smaller cohort, or too small a cohort, of younger people. This means a shortage of workers to replace the surge of retirement by war babies born between 1939 and 1945 and baby boomers born between 1946 and 1965. Immigration alone will not fill this gap.

Although CARP does not believe in mandatory retirement and strongly opposes mandatory employment, attitudes and practices must change if we are to embrace this new reality.

•(1020)

Mr. William Gleberzon (Director, Government Relations, Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus): When CARP presented its opposition to mandatory retirement, there was panic in some quarters that this could mean delaying the current ages of eligibility for pensions. For CARP this is unacceptable. Choice must be at the core of whether to retire or not. It must be based on ability, never on age. The current ages to access pensions must not be changed, in spite of the views set forth by the Fraser Institute, the OECD, the Conference Board of Canada, a recent article in *The National Post* by the C.D. Howe Institute, and an editorial on September 28 of this year in *The Globe and Mail*. Their conclusions are draconian and don't take into account real people in a real world.

CARP believes in the carrot of incentives rather than the stick of enforcement. Canadians are living longer and healthier lives today. It's commonly expressed that today's 65 is the new 45. Therefore, it's a mistake and a waste to buy into ageist myths, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. For example, older people are not necessarily frail, slow, or sick. They are able to learn new things. In fact, they bring with them life experience, work expertise, maturity, and a passion for lifelong learning. To quote UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons:

The whole world stands to gain from an empowered older generation, with the potential to make tremendous contributions to the development process and to the work of building more productive, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

This dynamic can and should be harnessed, nurtured, and used for the benefit of individuals, the workplace, and society. Matching the skills of older Canadians with the jobs that have to be filled in broad and creative ways is the way to go. For example, we should recognize that a person can apply a skill set in one field to another field. Of course, this requires vision, imagination, and thinking outside the box, rather than ordinary expectations.

This result can enrich productivity across the country. Of course, in some cases, training, retraining, or upgrading may be necessary. Some skills can and should draw on non-professional experience such as the skills implicit in homemaking. Again, this may necessitate training.

Of those who are frail, either physically or mentally, many are still capable of activity, though it may be limited. For example, they can use modern technology to work from home. Their contribution can be significant for employers and themselves. The young and the old have a lot to exchange, share, and learn from each other in terms of skills, experience, and ideas. Given the opportunities, together they can create a dynamic and productive work force that is effective and efficient.

There are also situations where mentoring, counselling, consulting, and coaching are useful. If done properly, they can enhance the knowledge of both young and old. This could be especially appropriate for those retired Canadians who want to work part-time or on contract. It's no secret that active living and good health go hand in hand. Physically, intellectually, and spiritually, active living is a major determinant of health, physical and mental, and generates savings to the health care system. As well, the individual's quality of life and independence come into play.

Once again, it must be reiterated that we're talking about choice rather than mandatory retirement—choice based on ability, not age.

Ms. Judy Cutler: When older workers are encouraged and allowed to be part of the labour force, the economy and government coffers benefit as much as the individual. Not only do these people pay taxes, they put money back into the economy, which of course stimulates productivity. This is an important reason not to cut back on pension income for those who are still working. It all goes back anyway.

CARP is very concerned about the plight of the estimated five million family caregivers across the country. Their role in home care can't be ignored. Since many of them continue to work or leave work to be full-time caregivers, policies must be put in place for flexible

work hours and reasonable leaves of absence. For substantial leaves of absence, we would like to see a distinct EI fund and eligibility for more than the current limited period of palliative and end-of-life care. Also, the stop-out provision in CPP for new parents should be extended to family caregivers who leave work to provide elder care. We believe that in this case "family" should mean anyone in the situation of caregiving.

In conclusion, I'd just like to offer some of CARP's recommendations for enhancing the employability of older workers.

We would like to see a standing Senate or House of Commons committee to identify and combat ageism in the workforce—and we actually understand that there is going to be a Senate subcommittee with Sharon Carstairs, so we're very happy about that; a national strategy and campaign to encourage older workers to stay in or return to the workforce, including phased retirement, shorter hours, benefits, and tax credits for training and education; incentives for employers to retain and hire older workers, such as funding and/or tax credits, again for training, retraining, and upgrading; programs to promote intergenerational dialogue and exchange of experiences and ideas, as well as to bridge gaps through mentoring, coaching, and counselling; abolition of mandatory retirement based on age across the country, including in federally regulated industries; an in-person and electronic network of assistance and information for older workers to find jobs, including writing resumés, preparing for interviews, etc.; and a national strategy for unpaid caregivers, to include a distinct EI fund and a CPP stop-out provision for those who leave work to provide elder care, flexible hours, and reasonable leaves of absence for those who continue to work.

In the moment I have left, we want to congratulate Minister Finley regarding the recent announcement of the \$70 million for older workers in hard-hit regions. We were very pleased to hear that, and we recommend that this initiative be extended to those who are 50; perhaps even 45, which is the age at which human resource professionals define you as an older worker; and, of course, beyond 64 for seniors who want to continue working.

Thank you.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to our next presenter, Mr. Sawchuk, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Sawchuk (Acting Head, Centre for the Study of Education and Work, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto): Good day.

I'm a professor at the University of Toronto, cross-appointed to the departments of education and industrial relations. I've been invited here as the head of a research centre at the university, the Centre for the Study of Education and Work. It's a mix of community, union, and academic representatives who compose the steering committee, and it includes a network of dozens of international experts in this area.

Ms. Karen Lior, the executive director for the Toronto training board and a long-time steering committee member, will present just after me.

First, a word about the centre. The Centre for the Study of Education and Work has existed for just over ten years. Along with dozens of smaller research projects, the centre has produced two of the largest academic-based research initiatives in Canada in the study of education and work. The first initiative, from 1996-2001, was in the form of the new approaches to lifelong learning project, which featured 30 qualitative studies and the first national survey dedicated to all forms of learning and work, with special attention to informal learning. The second initiative, from 2001 to the present, was in the form of the work and lifelong learning project that carried out an additional 9,500-person national survey on lifelong learning and work, supported by 12 carefully selected qualitative studies to test its conclusions in various sectors and occupations and across various demographics. All this research is available on our website and in related publications, which you'll have listed in some of the notes.

Of all the ideas we could discuss here today, the two main points that Karen and I wish to express to you involve, first, rethinking the lifelong learning, work, and employability question, with special attention to skills transmission and underemployment, and secondly, immigration, credential recognition, trades and labour standards, which Karen will address.

Skills, knowledge, and expertise are what Canada hopes to use to compete in a global marketplace. However, Canada now leads the world—absolutely number one—in post-secondary educational attainment, and our research over the past decade has documented that Canadians engage in enormous amounts of non-credited training and in fact in self-directed informal learning. There is, in the words of Professor David Livingstone, the current Canada research chair in lifelong learning and work, a serious education and jobs gap.

While of course it continues to remain relevant to look at education training and other employability factors, evidence from our research makes it clear that the major problem facing Canada today is not actually skills shortage, but rather skills transmission and application in the workplace. In the absence of effective transmission and application mechanisms, Canadian workers are far more likely to face underemployment, which entails considerable economic waste, as well as inequities, which damage social inclusion. The major sticking point in our competitiveness is not the supply side of the labour market. Demonstrated quantitatively and qualitatively, these are the conclusions of over ten years of detailed work, the most massive that Canada has ever seen, in fact.

Ms. Lior is going to address the immigration and trades issue in a moment, but I want to leave you with key research issues that the evidence recommends we take seriously.

First, Canada would benefit enormously from the continuation of this national survey series by adding a 2008 national survey that would extend the 1998 and the 2003 surveys to make a ten-year analysis, with a midpoint. This survey already can guide important decisions on where energies and resources should be directed and should be continued. Further, basic and applied quantitative and qualitative research is needed in light of these issues. Specifically, that emerged around the sticking points of transmission, skills and knowledge, and around issues of underemployment.

We are now in a position to ask and answer crucial questions related to organizational and sectoral change, questions such as the following:

First, why do our workplaces not activate the enormous potential of Canadian workers across demographics, including across racial categories, social class categories, and categories of disability and gender?

Second, why are trade and apprenticeship programs not making use of the incredibly strong general educational foundation available in the Canadian population?

Third, why are traditional school-to-work transitions for youth failing to plug workers into productive, satisfying, and innovative jobs?

And finally, how do workplaces benefit or not benefit from the interrelations between the workplace and strong communities, neighbourhoods, and voluntary work participation? This is in fact a highly under-researched area that can add incredible economic value as well as increase social inclusion in our society.

• (1030)

I'm going to pass you over to Karen Lior now.

Ms. Karen Lior (Executive Director, Toronto Training Board, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto): As Peter said, I'm Karen Lior, and I'm the executive director of the Toronto Training Board, which is one of 21 local boards in the province of Ontario. We are governed by a volunteer board of directors representing seven labour market partners.

I'm going to talk about three things: the growing gap in labour markets, which is undermining Canadian civil society and creating barriers to economic and social integration; the fact that immigrants need systems that recognize their credentials and their off-shore experience and skills; and the fact that all workers need expanded and enforceable labour standards.

Canada is one of the few industrialized countries or developed nations that doesn't have an overall economic strategy, and it's one of the things that keep us from moving forward. My taxi driver yesterday was an accountant from Pakistan who is now back in school relearning all his accounting principles so he can practise in Canada. Things like that waste a lot of taxpayer dollars. Many of those who are working in the skilled trades, such as stone masons, bricklayers, carpenters, and those who operate heavy machinery, also do manual labour.

In case you're wondering, I'm going to jump around a little bit, because Peter said some of these things, and I'm going to be saying some other things.

The point I want to make about the skilled trades is that we make it difficult for people to get into the skilled trades. Fifty-two percent of this workforce is due to retire in the next 15 years. Their children, for a change, are not moving back into the skilled trades. They've gone on to other professions. Many of the trades have changed with the introduction of technology, which opens up opportunities for those who haven't considered going into the skilled trades, but we don't have the policies and programs in place to move people from high school or from university back into the skilled trades.

We talk about the three pillars of the educational system—college, university, and apprenticeship—but college and university have access routes between them, and apprenticeship stands on its own. We are one of the few nations in which apprenticeship is a solitude, one of our many solitudes.

Many of the new jobs we're seeing are part-time, low-paid, and part of the precarious workforce. We need labour standards that allow workers to get paid. In Toronto, there are millions of dollars owed to workers who have been hired by unethical employers and then let go, or who have employers who don't pay them. Over a million workers in the city of Toronto are living below the poverty level, and a third of those are families with children.

People with disabilities have very few opportunities to participate actively in the labour market. In our TOP survey—our trends, opportunities, and priorities survey—which we're doing now, people have written in questions about why we aren't addressing the issue of people with disabilities.

We need overall policies that allow people to move around in the same way that we allow goods and services to move around. There's a lot of mobility in the world around the globalization of goods and services, but we need the same kinds of policies so we can take advantage of the skills and expertise of our workers. We need policies that protect and encourage people's mobility, as well as product mobility. In order to compete in the global marketplace, we must find ways to use the skills and talents of all our workers. We need to understand that the security agenda is also a barrier to our economic agenda.

I think I'm just going to go to our conclusions.

We need policies that allow people, as I said, to move in and out of the labour force. We need policies that look at more than jobs. We need policies that look at overall sustainable livelihoods, that look at people as assets and not deficits, and not as something that needs to be fixed. We need policies that look at how people can help them fix what's wrong. . We need employment policies that are sensitive to the entirety of workers' lives. We need ways to allow women to go to work, to allow people with disabilities to go to work, and to allow all of us to be productive workers who participate in Canada's economic growth and productivity.

Thank you.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you both very much.

We'll move on to our next group. I believe we have Ms. Verma and Ms. Devries.

Ms. Veena Verma (Barrister & Solicitor, Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre & Cornish LLP; Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (KAİROS)): Thank you very much for giving us an opportunity to present to the committee today.

My name is Veena Verma. I'm a lawyer at a labour law firm, but I'm making a joint submission on behalf of four organizations. I'm here today with Jennifer de Vries, the program coordinator of the refugee and migration section at KAİROS, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives.

KAİROS is an umbrella organization bringing together churches and religious organizations to deliberate on issues of common concern and advocate for social change. KAİROS works with partners who advocate on behalf of each group of migrant workers, whom we will be discussing today. We ask that you please note that today's submission is a joint submission with the FCJ Refugee Centre, United Food and Commercial Workers Canada, and the National Alliance of Philippine Women in Canada.

I'd like to note that we do have individuals from those organizations here. During the question and answer period, if you have specific questions relating to the live-in caregivers or undocumented workers, we'll bring them forward to the microphone to answer those questions.

This submission has also been endorsed by Action Canada for Population and Development, as well as the Coalition d'Appui aux Travailleuses et Travailleurs Migrants. Our submission is focused on workers' mobility and seasonal workers, who we understand are part of your mandate in looking at employability issues in Canada. Specifically, we're focused on three groups.

The first groups is seasonal agricultural workers. Those are the Mexican and Caribbean workers who are coming to Canada under the seasonal agricultural workers program. But it also is increasingly including agricultural workers who are coming under the low-skilled worker pilot project, who are coming from other developing countries.

The second group of migrant workers is domestic workers who are also coming under a temporary work program called the live-in caregiver program. These workers, predominantly women from the south, perform work in child care, care for the elderly, care for people with disabilities, and housekeeping.

The third group of migrant workers is non-status persons. They include those who may have initially arrived in Canada under one of the temporary programs and then decided to stay on in Canada, those who have come to Canada as survivors of human trafficking, torture, or rape, or those who have come into Canada for family reunification purposes, only to realize that it's almost impossible to obtain status within Canada.

In June 2006 there was a two-day conference called the National Migrant Justice Gathering, which was held at York University. It brought over a hundred migrants and migrant justice advocates who shared their experiences and identified common concerns relating to these three groups. Our submission today flows from many of the findings that came out of that conference.

While migrant and undocumented persons may work in different sectors of the Canadian economy, they do share common experiences and can certainly be characterized as vulnerable. The common link that brings these three groups together deals with their status. Their status is temporary or illegal while working in Canada.

Migrants and non-status persons, a largely racialized group, often flee poverty at home, only to find themselves in precarious living and working conditions in Canada. We suggest this can be explained by two reasons. The first is restrictions on labour mobility when they're in Canada. The second is their limited ability or their inability to gain any access to citizenship.

Live-in caregivers and seasonal agricultural workers, for example, in terms of the restrictions on their labour mobility, are tied to a single employer while they're in Canada and they must live on the employer's property. Some of the agricultural workers under the program, which has been in existence for forty years, have been coming to and returning to Canada for up to twenty years, working for anywhere from four to eight months per year in Canada, with absolutely no accrued citizenship rights.

Barriers to citizenship for migrant workers and non-status persons basically mean they are limited in their effective participation in the political process. They cannot vote or otherwise influence Canadian authorities to address concerns relating to their employment while they're in Canada.

These three groups face common problems of exploitation at work, poor accommodation, limited access to social services, low wages, long hours without adequate rest or overtime pay, and verbal and physical abuse. In some cases, migrant workers are receiving wages that are lower than Canadians doing the same work. These conditions are endured by migrant workers and non-status persons because of fear of reprisal for complaining, which includes deportation and repatriation.

● (1040)

Having temporary status or non-status, coupled with the inability to move in the labour market while in Canada, means that these workers are extremely vulnerable to arbitrary employer decisions

and that enforcement mechanisms are not used. There are no appeal processes should an employer make arbitrary or illegal decisions and decide, for example, to repatriate a worker.

HRSDC requires a labour market opinion to be provided when a temporary work permit is approved. They have to consider several factors. I want to highlight two of them.

One factor is whether hiring a temporary worker addresses a labour shortage. Labour shortages in industries such as agriculture, child care, or elder care are in large part a result of poor working conditions and low wages in these sectors, as opposed to a shortage of low-skilled workers in Canada. Historically, during periods of high unemployment there have been endemic shortages that can persist in these sectors.

Another factor that the HRSDC labour opinion requires before approving a temporary worker is—and this is important for us—whether the wages and working conditions offered are sufficient to attract Canadian citizens or permanent residents to, and retain them in, that work.

We believe that this factor is too often overlooked. In essence, the Canadian government has adopted a policy of bringing in cheap foreign labour to perform the work that Canadians do not want to do, rather than addressing poor and unsafe working conditions in certain sectors.

In the case of the live-in caregiver program, we believe temporary foreign workers are being used to privatize the public demand for universal child care and other health care needs of Canadians. It must be recognized that these workers are providing valuable services within Canada's labour market by taking care of children and elderly people, as well as by harvesting crops for domestic consumption and international trade.

We have ten recommendations in our written submission, but I want to highlight four this morning.

First, priority should be given to allowing foreign workers to have access to permanent status programs, as opposed to temporary worker programs. If there is a labour shortage, bring them in as permanent residents in the same way that skilled workers are brought in. If temporary workers are used to fill labour shortages, they should have full access to enforcement mechanisms in Canada and opportunities to apply for permanent residency.

Second, implement a regularization program that would allow a moratorium on deportation of non-status workers who have come forward to have their status regularized, at least until the case has been reviewed. Any regularization program would necessarily include security screening, as required for any permanent resident under the Immigration Act.

Third, we recommend providing a transparent and impartial appeal process and a dispute- resolution mechanism that would be available to workers before there is any decision to repatriate or deport them.

Finally, create a review mechanism to ensure that foreign temporary worker programs are not being used to respond to labour shortages that are the result of poor and illegal working conditions. There should be regular reviews devoted to how working conditions and wages can be improved in certain sectors.

Thank you.

• (1045)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Verma.

Mr. D'Amours.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): [*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank you for coming here today to make a presentation to this committee.

I would like to ask Ms. Cutler a question about older workers. Some industries and companies have realized the benefits to be gained in hiring these persons, but many have yet to understand this.

You talked about the whole issue of discrimination. Discrimination is illegal in Canada; it is against the law. However, we know that people are not talking about it. When they must chose, companies are discriminating and pleading any given pretext to do so, even though they should not do this.

Would it be possible for your organization to do a better job in having companies all over the country to get the message that there are benefits to be gained in hiring workers who have some experience, given the fact that they have a lot to contribute to newer and much younger employees?

With your indulgence, I will immediately ask a second question. It deals with your comment on the announcement of \$70 million that was made last week. I understood your message and I know that you represent all persons who are 50 years and older in this country. Do you understand that there are, everywhere in this country, what we call single- industry towns and villages? In these communities, it is all very well to train people aged 55 plus, but there are no other jobs for them. The announcement does not cover these people; it only covers a few industries and not all regions of this country.

What happens to these people when there is only one industry? You can train them, but what will they do after receiving their training? Even some towns with a population of 10,000 are single-industry towns. What can we do when this industry is shut down overnight?

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Cutler: We use the words “integrated” and “holistic” a lot at CARP. In this situation, it's very applicable.

Let me start with the second comment you made. The announcement in social development is a step in the right direction, not more than that, in our view. We're pleased that at least the conditions are being recognized and the doors opened a little bit. It's not enough, and that's why we recommend that it be just the first step in taking much more action.

In terms of discrimination, we live in a youth-oriented society. There is a lot of ageism in the workplace, in health care, in the media, across all sectors of society. This is why we're very pleased that the Senate is going to be doing a study to examine, define, identify, and develop recommendations regarding ageing and ageism. We have an ageing population. We have to deal with it. That sounds like a negative thing. We could deal with it positively, because it can be a very positive contribution to the economy, to our society, to communities.

In terms of making employers aware of the benefits of older workers, eventually it's going to happen, because they're going to have to hire someone. Why wait until it's a crisis and have crisis management? If we as a society honoured experience and expertise we wouldn't even be having this conversation. We have to deal with it on the foundation level in terms of dealing with ageism generally. That will filter into the labour market as well.

I'm not sure if that answers your question.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: That's okay, you have answered my question. Essentially, you said at the end that we must face the reality. The reality is that in the generation before mine, that of my father and my mother, there were 10, 12 or 14 children per family. Today, I have an 18-month old daughter and I certainly do not expect to have five children. Our goal is to have two of them, unless we have twins.

As you have said, many are waiting for the crisis to come. And when it comes, there may be some 50-year and older persons who will tell us that we have done nothing for them and that they have decided to retire completely and get some rest. It is a risk that these businesses are facing. Do you agree with this?

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Cutler: Absolutely, it's a risk. It's the same thing as the provinces getting rid of nurses. Now there's a crisis, and there aren't enough nurses. You can't just snap your fingers and reverse the situation.

I want to point out, you may be having two children, or three children, if you have twins or triplets, but you're likely to live longer than your parents, and be healthier and more active. We have to change our perception of the demographics and realize that at 50, you're not going to be sitting at home in a rocking chair, which was the reality for your parents, or, if not your parents, your grandparents.

We keep saying that when the boomers came in such force, we didn't have trouble building schools or other facilities for them. We dealt with it. We have to have the same mindset for the ageing population and create a society that is for all ages.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Madame Bonsant for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Ms. Cutler, my husband is 60 years old and he just retired. He was quite happy about it.

You wrote in your brief that you do not want people to be forced to retire at the age of 70. I for one is against that. As I said earlier, some small towns have only one or two industries. There are people who have worked all their life, who are working hard, in the construction industry or any other sector, and who are getting tired.

If there are lay-offs in an industry and if we let go the younger people aged 22, 23 or 24 instead of letting go older workers aged 60, 62 or 63, these young people will not stay in town. They will move and go find work elsewhere. When the older people reach the age of 63, 64 or 65, that is in two or three years, they will leave and the younger ones will no longer be there to take over, which will create a second shortage. There will no longer be any relief.

I believe that a person who has the opportunity to retire at 60, as my husband has just done, can give some training. He is a professional buyer with 35 years experience. He does not want to work anymore, because he has had enough, but he is prepared to contribute a day or two and give some training to the younger generation.

We hear people talk about the lack of relief. It is not by keeping the people at work until the age of 70 and by laying-off the 22 or 23 year old that we will solve this problem. That is my opinion. What is your opinion on this matter?

• (1055)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Cutler: I think maybe you misunderstood what we were saying, because we certainly are totally against mandatory retirement. We think it has to be choice, and what we're missing now is choice when there is mandatory retirement. We get calls almost every day. At a conference we had last week, we met someone who had worked for an airline. She said when she was 64 she was okay, and then when she turned 65 suddenly they were saying she wasn't able to do the job, but she wanted to continue working.

Most people will retire. We're not even saying that most people will continue to work if they have a choice, but there should be incentives and benefits for those who do choose to work or to go back to work. We really don't promote making anyone retire at any age. If people can retire at 50, fantastic. If they want to work to 90, and they're able to do the job, they should have that choice too. Our executive director is 87, and he says it's what keeps him going. If I had a choice, I'd like to retire.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I understand what you are saying. Where I live, a 67-year old woman was teaching at the kindergarten level,

with small toddlers running around the classroom. Do you sincerely believe that this woman had the capacity to run after these children and do the work? She was there because she did not want to stop working, because she did not know what else to do to occupy her days. You have to be reasonable, depending on the trade you're in. She was preventing a 22 or 23-year old from coming in to teach this kindergarten class. She wanted to keep her job because she had no idea what else she could do at home. There are times when people should be given the choice, and then there are times when they should not. That lady was a great person, but on occasion she would have to go sit in a corner because she was really tired. She did this job for 45 years. I believe that schools need to recruit younger teachers. I have some trouble accepting the fact that in some trades, they are telling people that they can go on until they are 85 years old if they want to. It seems to me that an 85-year old person is not really able to deal with children in a kindergarten class. I would like to hear your comments on this.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Cutler: First of all, I think we have to be careful not to pit one generation against another.

Ms. France Bonsant: No, no.

Ms. Judy Cutler: I know you're not doing that, but we want to make sure you know we think that.

Again, in talking about a holistic and integrated approach, we're talking here about employability. But at CARP, we also try to promote a better pension system, so people's choices aren't based on just being able to pay the bills. Pensions really should be able to meet the cost of living. We need to create a society and communities that engage older people more broadly than just in the workforce. That could be through continuing education, volunteering, or mentoring. It could be doing a whole host of things. We haven't explored that.

We hope we're going to be part of the Senate committee. It's certainly what we'll be asking for. We're hoping that the Senate report will address the concerns you have.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I represent the Bloc Québécois in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois introduced a bill calling for a program linked with employment insurance. It is an income support program for older workers. I don't know how the interpreter will translate this in English. It is exactly what you need. The Conservatives replied to us in the House of Commons that at the age of 55, a person is not finished and should continue working. That is not at all the issue. They probably do not understand the POWA system. The POWA is for people who lose their job, who want to retrain and who need some temporary financial assistance before they can start a second, third or fourth career. Today's youth will have three, four or five careers in their lifetime.

The POWA is also for those who are not capable of retraining. You cannot ask a person who has only a grade 3 or 4 to become a surgeon within six months. That would be absurd. We are trying to have a bill passed in order to help the knowledge generation, that of people aged 50, 60 and 65. You are our library. You are the people who have built countries, cities, provinces, etc., and we owe you some respect. I believe that the POWA program offers the people who want to retire and who cannot afford it the opportunity to do so with dignity, before they become eligible to the benefits of the Régime des rentes du Québec and to their pension, at the age of 60. I hope that the message has been understood.

● (1100)

[English]

Ms. Judy Cutler: Just to tell you briefly, we did a presentation at the House of Commons pre-budget finance committee, and we actually told Mr. St-Cyr that we supported that bill.

Ms. France Bonsant: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move on to our next round.

Mr. Martin has to sneak out because of a previous engagement. He's not going to be around for the second round, so I'm going to give him a couple of extra minutes this time around.

Mr. Martin.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): I have a question for each of you. I'll try to make them succinct, and then maybe we can get the answers in from each of you as well.

I want to start by saying to William and Judy, it's nice to see you again. We see you often, advocating on behalf of, I think, a very important group, given that I'm 58, and we need voices.

I think the bigger issue for me, anyway, is the whole question of poverty and seniors. You can have choice, but if there's no choice because it's the only way you can feed yourself and pay the rent and the increasing property taxes, then you have to go to work. I find a lot of seniors now working in jobs that really they don't want to be at. They're not happy. They're working at McDonald's; they're doing things that are difficult.

So I'm thinking we should be looking at bringing in a pension plan system across the country that's portable, that's sufficient, and that would allow people actually to retire in dignity and not have to work if they don't want to. In that way, it would allow some of our younger people to come and take some of those jobs that they would then vacate, and it would also allow some of the people who come in as temporary workers to become permanent workers and get good jobs that pay well and have a future in them.

Anyway, the question is, should we be doing more, particularly considering the amount of poverty out there among seniors these days?

Mr. William Gleberzon: Part of the problem—getting back to what Judy was saying about a holistic point of view—is that we believe the public pension system in its entirety needs to be reviewed, and reformed and increased.

For example, we're sitting on a powder keg. Immigrants who come to this country have to be here 40 continuous years before they're allowed to get old age security. We have a lot of immigrants who have come here much older than that, and that's something that I think really has to be reviewed, because as those people get to be 65 years of age, they're going to fall into the category that you've been talking about. So we're looking at something in the future, but it's those kinds of elements within our current public pension system that need to be properly attuned to the realities we're faced with.

The guaranteed income supplement is another one, because while there has been an increase in the guaranteed income supplement—the first in about 20 years—the amounts, in actual fact, are totally minimal. About one-third of our citizens live below the poverty line. Our public pension system—old age security, guaranteed income supplement, and some of them may get a bit of CPP, say, from a spouse or someone—guarantees that they will not live in dire poverty, but they will not live above the low-income cut-off line. So we have to review the entire system that exists.

Secondly, we have been advocating and in fact in the former government the Minister of State responsible for seniors advocated a band above the low-income cut-off line that seniors could receive through working, without endangering the guaranteed income supplement. I believe the band that had been recommended was around \$2,000 or \$3,000, and we said the same. It's not to force people to work, but if they have to work to augment their income, they should not lose the benefits they have—and they very well might, because if they get money above the low-income cut-off line, they lose fifty cents for every dollar they get.

So our system is not designed to meet the kinds of challenges you're talking about, and those challenges won't go away in the future, because a lot of people work part-time on an almost full-time basis, so they don't have pensions. All they will be dependent on is the public pension system. So we're hopeful that when this committee is established by the Senate it will look at the kinds of issues you're talking about as part of the overall picture that has to be reviewed in the country.

● (1105)

Ms. Judy Cutler: As a kind of basis for what you're asking, governments tend to look at how much money is going out to seniors, and never look at the other side of the equation of how much comes back in income tax and GST into the economy. So it's a very skewed perspective to not do that.

Mr. Tony Martin: To the group from OISE, I heard what you said about there not being a problem with skills shortage but there's a problem with transmission. I've been referring to it as a bit of a disconnect.

I have young people in my community who want to work and are going out there getting the skills, but they're not able to get into the workplace to get the apprenticeship they need to give them the credentials. So I'd like you to comment further on that. What do we need to do to get that socket plugged into that wall unit, or whatever?

On top of that is the whole question of the social economy and our under-appreciation of it in this country, when you compare it to other jurisdictions around the world. This government has now cut \$39 million out of an initiative that was put out by the previous government to actually invest in the social economy.

Ms. Karen Lior: Those are two little questions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Karen Lior: The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum two years ago released a study called “Accessing and Completing Apprenticeship Training in Canada: Perceptions of Barriers”. There are a few problems with apprenticeships overall.

One problem is that there is no coherent apprenticeship system in Canada. So you can be an electrician in Ontario, but if you want to go to B.C. to work in construction for the Olympics, your trade or your qualifications may not be recognized. So the fact that apprenticeship is balkanized and provincialized makes it very difficult for apprentices and journey-persons to move. It makes it hard to recognize skills, and it speaks again to the skills shortage. Whether it's skills shortage or people shortage, I don't know the answer to that question.

Another problem with apprentices is that you can go to a college and do your training, but you will have great difficulty finding an employer. Even though you have great training and you may be certified in your trade, the barrier is that employers don't see apprenticeship as an investment; they see it as a cost.

Another recent study from the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum on the return of training investment shows that for every dollar spent on training an apprentice you get \$1.38 back. So it is an investment and there's a return on your investment. But we need to change the mindset, the paradigm around training apprentices, find ways to encourage support and allow employers to hire apprentices, and not see them as a drain on their resources.

We have a whole lack of a culture of training in Canada. In OECD surveys that come out, we're usually somewhere between 23 and 26 among developed countries in what we invest in training our workers. Many employers have a perception that their workers are supposed to arrive completely trained and ready to do the job. Who's supposed to supply that training remains a question. So that's another shift we need to make.

Everybody wants to be a carpenter or an electrician, and the trades we need people to move into are less sexy or less popular. We need to find ways to encourage parents to understand that the trades are incredibly lucrative. Would I be happy if my children had gone into the trades and could support me in my old age so I wouldn't have to worry about retiring—which I can't do because I'm still paying their university fees? Yes, I would be really happy if they had become tradespeople. I have an actor and a dancer. I'm going to be paying for them forever. But we need to find ways to make it easy for school counsellors to encourage kids to go into apprenticeships—to find opportunities to introduce kids to the trades as sexy.

I once said to a group of tradespeople who wanted to know how to get junior high school girls into the trades: You have a TV commercial that shows this woman emerge in her welding outfit; she pulls off her helmet, takes off her goggles, and her glorious hair falls

out. She says, “I welded that whole piece without breaking a nail.” They said that was so unfeminine. I said, “You want to get junior high school girls—there's the makeup counter.”

We need to change the way we talk about the trades, and we need to make opportunities for people. We need to support employers to be able to hire apprentices. We need to see them as an investment.

• (1110)

The Chair: It's almost time, but did you want one quick question?

Mr. Tony Martin: Yes, and maybe we'll talk about the social economy another time.

On the migrant worker piece, I was in Vancouver a couple of weeks ago doing some forums on poverty and discovered there that folks are bringing in illegal workers, housing them illegally, and paying them \$3 and \$4 an hour to do work that Canadians would get paid \$25 to \$30 an hour to do. I note you have organized labour in your group. I know from them there's some resistance to that because it creates unfair competition in the country. How do you deal with that?

Ms. Veena Verma: One of our recommendations is regularization of workers when they're here. We don't like to talk about people being illegal, but that they don't have status. Many of the workers are coming with strong labour and social attachments in Canada. We believe they should be regularized, and there should be clampdowns on those types of employers. They should be coming in legally and they should be given opportunities to come in legally. Why are they coming in illegally? It's because low-skilled workers find it close to impossible to get into Canada. As you've probably been hearing for days now, you've got doctors and lawyers from abroad coming in as taxi drivers, but we don't bring in agricultural workers or live-in caregivers with full landed status. Why not? Why do they have to come in through temporary programs?

I want to make one comment in terms of the low-skilled worker and the decline in apprenticeships. This wasn't asked of me directly, but also note that the low-skilled worker pilot project, which I understand may not even be a pilot any longer, is being used to bring in construction workers and is replacing apprenticeship programs. The apprenticeship programs are going down because employers are bringing in foreign temporary labour to fill that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin. That's all the time we have.

On a point of clarification, Bill, you talked about how you couldn't qualify the people who had to work 40 years. I was under the impression it takes 40 years to get the full CPP/OAS.

•(1115)

Mr. William Gleberzon: That's correct, but when you think about what the full amount is, you're talking about not a lot of money left over at the end of the day.

The Chair: Thank you, I appreciate that.

Last person in this round, Mr. Albrecht, for seven minutes please.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thanks to each of the witnesses for coming today.

I wanted to follow up on one of my main concerns or passions, the whole area of skilled workers. I don't want to put them in competition with university grads, but certainly one of my concerns is how we can raise the apparent value of people in the skilled trades. I'm glad you've already identified some of your ideas on that.

I want to clarify one thing about national standards. I'm no expert on this, so I need your clarification, but I thought there was a program nationally, the red seal program, that recognizes many trades. Is that a very small percentage? Could you help me with that?

Ms. Karen Lior: The red seal program recognizes 47 trades. In Ontario we have over 140 trades.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: About one-third of them.

My second question relates to credentials for immigrants. Is the problem with foreign credentials more acute in certain professions, and are those professions themselves sometimes the barrier to accessing those credentials? For example, in health professions and those sorts of things, are we facing serious obstacles at the professional organizational level that create those barriers?

Ms. Karen Lior: Yes and no. Some of the professional associations, the medical associations, act as gatekeepers. The accountants have been better. Bonnie was here before, and some of them have really good programs to recognize prior credentials. Bill 124 in Ontario, which has just been introduced, takes a step toward ameliorating that situation.

We bring in people and ask them what their professions are and then they can't work. It's not only the professional associations, it's the whole system of before you choose to come to Canada, en route to Canada, what happens to you when you get to Canada, and then who we choose to recognize and who we don't. We choose to recognize certain professions. Tradespeople who come in also can't work.

It speaks to the whole lack of a coordinated coherent labour market policy that includes our immigration policy. We address it piecemeal instead of taking on the whole issue, which I understand is huge, but we do ourselves a disservice.

Mr. Peter Sawchuk: The notion of having a federal-provincial-territorial intergovernmental working group on the links between immigration and the labour market is an absolute no-brainer. We have them on lots of different issues that are cross-jurisdictional, such as taxation, aboriginal issues, environment. The ministers of labour have met on this, and this is a key linkage. We could say that about lifelong learning work generally, but that's an important thing to look toward. Rewarding the occupational regulating bodies that

are good citizens and doing the right thing is really important. That should send a strong message to the ones that aren't, and there are some that aren't.

Ms. Karen Lior: May I add one thing?

If you do your apprenticeship in Germany, your academic studies, the time you have taken to learn the theory is credited toward further academic study. So you can do your trade, you can become a journey person, practise, then move into post-secondary education and get a master's degree or a doctorate, and there's no repetition of your learning, which is totally not the case in Canada. So we need to fix those ladders, those access points.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I have another question on the whole area of recognizing foreign credentials prior to arriving in Canada. How would you structure an organization, or what advice would you give the government, to minimize the frustration on the part of immigrants who came here with the understanding they were going to be recognized, and after ten years they're still driving a taxi, which is a very noble profession but not what they were trained for? How would you address that?

Ms. Karen Lior: I don't think there is any easy answer.

There is an organization called WES, World Education Services, in Toronto, which works with people to figure out ways to evaluate their credentials. I think you could have that kind of system in place, perhaps, in Canadian embassies and consulates in other countries, so people could have that done for them before they choose to come to Canada. Perhaps that would help.

•(1120)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: So there is an organization whose expertise we could possibly use. We don't need to start from ground zero.

Ms. Karen Lior: Quebec has a whole system in place, where they have done it for years. Alberta has a system. But the systems in the different provinces don't even talk to each other. Yes, there are systems in use.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I have a question to Ms. Verma on the third recommendation, in terms of a transparent impartial appeal process.

Ms. Veena Verma: Right.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Could you describe the current appeal process, if there is one?

Ms. Veena Verma: It's different for each one.

Let me talk to you about the migrant agricultural worker program, the seasonal agricultural worker program, for example. Others may be able to speak to a live-in caregiver program.

The way it works....There is a memorandum of understanding, as you know, and the workers also have to sign employment contracts when they come in. There is no consultation with the workers before they come in, because the argument is that they do this negotiation with the state governments, though I believe there is sometimes a conflict of interest between the sending country and the worker. Their interests may not always be in line. In terms of the contracts, there is language to say that employers can repatriate, without further compensation, for non-compliance, refusal to work, or any other sufficient reason.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I think your answer is that there is no appeal process.

Ms. Veena Verma: There is absolutely no appeal.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: That was my question.

Ms. Veena Verma: It would be basically to go to court. You would go to court for breach of contract.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I was not clear whether the current process is flawed, or if there isn't one. I think you've answered that there isn't one.

Ms. Veena Verma: That's correct, because I think the understanding is that they're supposed to access the system the way a Canadian would, which is to go to court and file a wrongful dismissal complaint, I guess.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Albrecht.

We'll move to the second round, which will be five minutes for the question and answer.

Mr. D'Amours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Ms. Verma and Ms. Devries.

As a liberal MP from New Brunswick, I have supported in my riding a project funded by the previous government and called Carrefour d'immigration rurale and whose objective was to facilitate the integration of immigrants in rural francophone parts of this country. I understand the same thing exist for the anglophone community. It is a matter of integration. First of all, we must get across the idea that we are all immigrants. Secondly, tolerance is somewhat more difficult to bring about in some regions.

You are saying that some people are not necessarily paid the same salary that is being paid to Canadian workers or to workers who live in Canada and have Canadian citizenship. Tell me if I am wrong, but I believe that if there are people who came here to work temporarily in the agriculture sector and who have no status, as you have mentioned, it is because there is a need, or else because workers presently living in Canada and having their citizenship papers do not want some of these jobs, or simply because there is a shortage of workers.

If the people who have the citizenship do not want these jobs or if some industries such as agriculture are really lacking in manpower to fill the existing jobs, we should make sure that these people are

respected, because we need them. Let us work accordingly and let us give them the hand that they need: it is a matter of respect.

In answering the question put by my colleague Mr. Albrecht, you have read the section where it is mentioned that the employer can fire someone for "any other reason". I know that migrant workers have no protection and will not complain for fear of losing their job and being sent home. In this situation, there is certainly a risk that these people do not receive fair wage for the work they are doing. Thus it would be essential to establish fair and equitable rules for these workers, given the fact that we need them in Canada. It is not as if they were not needed. If there are agreements between countries, it is certainly because we have a need for them.

So if I understood correctly, one of your objectives is to enable these people to obtain some documents to make sure they are respected in terms of their work.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Ms. Veena Verma: I'm sorry. Was there a question?

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: It's all a question of respect.

Ms. Veena Verma: Yes.

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: If we need those employees to work in different industries in Canada, we should be able to give to them some respect, but they should have some legislation in place to make sure they are not persecuted or whatever. This is the main part, I think, of what you asked us. It's to make sure that we put in place some framework so that those persons will not be persecuted and so that they will receive fair wages and have a fair chance to complain also.

Ms. Veena Verma: Absolutely, and that's the problem. Currently any complaint means they're on the next plane back home. If you look at agricultural workers and live-in caregivers, once they are fired, or once an employer decides the person is no longer wanted, they lose their income and the roof over their head. They stay on the employer's property. While the work permit may say they can stay in Canada legally for two months, if the employer decides to arbitrarily terminate that employment, they have lost their housing and their response is typically to get on the next plane and go home. They have no place else to go.

We need a transparent dispute resolution mechanism tailored to address the concerns and conditions of temporary foreign workers in Canada. The current legal system and complaint processes don't work for these workers, given the conditions under which they come into Canada. We need to think of a structure whereby they can raise those complaints and have those working conditions fixed. Respect is a big thing. It's the number one complaint I hear from all workers.

Francisco Rico, who is with the FCJ Refugee Centre, may also have some comments.

Mr. Francisco Rico-Martinez (Co-Chair, Working Group on Inland Protection, Canadian Council for Refugees): Perhaps the solution, in terms of stability and integration, is full status in Canada. We bring people in on a temporary basis. When we bring individuals in to work, we are creating social problems here and back home, because we are separating families. It is not possible for a father or mother to integrate in society when one of their main concerns is to bring their family here. They are sending money back. That is the priority in terms of children and everything. Then we ask them to learn English to integrate, to learn our values and everything.

If we need people to work in different sectors, the only way to treat them with respect is to give them full status, so that they don't have to depend on the employer for their status. They should only have to depend on their skills and their rights. Under the Canadian system, the concept of temporary workers was developed some 70 years ago, and the concept hasn't been reviewed since.

We should remove the golden rule of Immigration Canada that you have to apply from outside. Why is this, when people who are already here could apply? If we had programs related to their skills, they could access them when they are in Canada. They wouldn't have to go back to their country and come back with a work permit.

The concept of immigration that we have in Canada goes against the global system, the market, and economic development. This is stopping Canada from having the human resources we need. It is totally against our interests.

• (1130)

The Chair: We bring these people in who produce and who are good citizens, in a temporary sense. Then we make it so difficult for them to apply that they actually can't. We now allow foreign students to work. This changed only recently. That is a great first step. They work while they're here and get their degree. Then we send them back home and make them reapply. I have heard time and again that in light of the shortage of workers we need to treat people with respect and look at other ways.

You suggested, Ms. Verma, that we don't want to call them illegal. The reality is that what they're doing is illegal, but we need to change the system, so that it's not so difficult for someone to get in to help to produce and contribute to Canadian society. We're talking about trying to make the system easier, as opposed to keeping it as complicated as it is right now. I understand that temporary workers are treated differently. What you're suggesting, I hear loud and clear, is that they be given the respect deserved by those who come to produce and contribute to Canadian society.

Thanks for those comments.

Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you.

My question is also addressed to you, Ms. Verma.

In Quebec, we have our own immigration system. Quebec has the right to choose its immigrants. I know some people who have welcomed immigrants from Mexico who came here to work. To accommodate them, these people have learned to speak Spanish. It

was thus easier to communicate with them. I hope that in Quebec, these immigrants are treated well.

Have you made comparisons between provinces? Are there provinces where immigrants are not treated as well compared to other provinces? I would like to know about that.

Secondly, I live in a community where we have a French university and an English university. Many young immigrants, new Quebecers and new Canadians, have landed in our country, but they have degrees that are not recognized by Quebec or Canada. That is a problem for them.

Let me give you the example of a person who studied law in Argentina. In that country, the law is not exactly the same as in Quebec and in Canada. I could also submit the case of a manual worker who works with concrete. Now the concrete that is used in Mexico does not have the same characteristics as the concrete used in Quebec and in Canada, where it is colder. There is a process to be followed. That person has to relearn how to mix the right ingredients.

I believe that the problem is not that of the immigrant who lands in Canada, but rather that of the Canadian consulates that do not give the right information.

When the immigrant is asking to go to Canada, that's all very well, but when he arrives here, he suddenly hits a wall. We cannot give jobs to engineers coming from abroad, because we have too many engineers in Quebec. So we must be careful to choose the right person at the right time for the right job.

Now here is my third question. We are facing a reality, that of religion. We must be mindful of that as well, because some religions have constraints as to the kind of jobs that the people can do. I would like to hear from you on this subject.

I hope that you have understood all three of my questions.

[*English*]

Ms. Veena Verma: I'm sorry, could you repeat the last question?

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: There is another reality, that of religion. Because some religions impose limitations, be it the Muslim, protestant, catholic, Sikh or any other religion, we must be mindful of some factors that could limit the kind of work that the people can do. I would like to hear you about this issue and I wonder whether you receive a lot of complaints regarding immigrants of the different religious persuasions.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Ms. Veena Verma: I don't understand the religious constructs affecting people's work. You would have to be much more specific about that. For example, I'm Hindu and Sikh, and I'm not aware of any restrictions that we have. So I don't know of—

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I agree.

In the medical field, for example, a Muslim woman must be examined by a female physician. Physicians who come here from Arabia have not completed the same studies or are not recognized as having exactly the same certification as physicians from Quebec or Canada, because of professional associations. Have you heard complaints of this nature?

Mme Veena Verma: No.

Ms. France Bonsant: What about you, sir?

[English]

Mr. Francisco Rico-Martinez: The problems we have in that area are very limited. It has not been an issue for us to find a solution in the workplace. I think religion is not an issue that is creating fewer problems in terms of jobs, or more problems. It is basically solved among their own communities.

The problem is that we don't consult with the communities we are working in. We try to impose solutions, and that creates a problem. But if we talk to them, we solve the problems.

Ms. France Bonsant: Okay.

Ms. Veena Verma: This is Cecilia Diocson. She's with the National Alliance of Philippine Women in Canada.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson (Executive Director, National Alliance of Philippine Women in Canada, Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives (KAİROS)): Good morning.

Thank you very much for giving me this brief opportunity to say something about the live-in caregiver program.

You asked what is different in other provinces from Quebec. In Quebec, live-in caregivers are not included in the workers' compensation program. I think that is really very important. Aside from the limited rights they have, these workers need to be compensated when they're injured at work. This has been implemented in other provinces. In British Columbia, they have been included since 1985. In Quebec, it's still a struggle for this group of workers.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

Mr. Albrecht, for five minutes.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I'm going to try to do a one-minute question back to Ms. Verma.

Can we assume that 100% of the temporary workers who come here would be interested in being permanent residents of Canada? Or do a number of them come because there are employment opportunities here and really wish to return to their country? Is that an issue at all?

Ms. Veena Verma: Speaking for the Mexican workers, I know for a fact that the Mexican consulate only recruits married workers to come to Canada, because it's a guarantee that they will go back.

That said, do they want to stay in Canada? If they can bring their family into Canada, I think you would probably increase the pool of workers who may want to come in. Both live-in caregivers and

agricultural workers are denied any type of family reunification. They can't come into Canada, only the worker.

Some Mexican workers I have spoken to have come here and they don't like it. So they work here for their contract, they go back, and they don't come back next year.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Okay. But you think that may change if they were allowed to bring their whole family, which makes total sense to me.

Ms. Veena Verma: Absolutely.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I have a question back to the CARP group; it doesn't matter who answers it. I noticed that you had one paragraph here talking about developing a distinct EI fund for caregivers. That makes a lot of sense to me. I think that not only do people over 55 contribute meaningfully to our economy and to the tax income of our country...

I'd like to know, have you done a study as to how this might impact the health care system positively, in terms of alleviating pressure, if a caregiver is given an incentive to care for a relative or a neighbour in their home? Have studies been done on this?

• (1140)

Ms. Judy Cutler: We've done a few studies and there have been others. I don't think caregivers need incentives. I was a caregiver twice: once for my mother—

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I wasn't thinking so much of the incentive as to what the actual cost burden is for not allowing them to do it, in terms of our health care system.

Ms. Judy Cutler: I don't have dollar figures, but I can tell you that going back to my own experience, if I hadn't been there 24/7 for my mother, she would have been in an institution. And if I hadn't been there for my brother, he probably would have been more in the hospital than at home.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: The costs would be ten times higher.

Ms. Judy Cutler: They would be ten times higher, plus the fact that caregivers are the core of the home care system. So if we're going to have an effective home care system, as we were talking about other areas, we have to have respect for the caregivers.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Philosophically and anecdotally, I certainly understand that there would be strong support for this. I'm just wondering, have any studies been done? I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but I think it would be interesting to have a study done to answer this question.

Ms. Judy Cutler: May I add that there is a program for palliative end-of-life care, and my understanding is that the government is surprised it's not taken advantage of more often.

First, many people don't know about it, but more to the point, you have to have worked within that year. So if someone's been a caregiver for two years, when they get to the end of life, they don't qualify.

Mr. William Gleberzon: On the other side too, as a corollary to what Judy was saying, there is a tax credit that a caregiver can receive. But again, you have to work to get a benefit of the tax credit. So what we're talking about here is recognizing the realities of a system that, as Judy said, is the backbone of our health care system. Because unless you can have someone at home to take care of the person who's discharged quickly from an institution or hospital, that whole notion isn't going to work.

Currently our national home care program, such as it is, is based on the assumption of getting people out of hospitals as quickly as possible and having them recover at home. But there's very little benefit or support for the person who is there to make sure that this is going to happen.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I don't know if Peter wanted to add to that.

Mr. Peter Sawchuk: There are studies that have estimated in dollar figures the effect on the economy of home work generally, a great portion of which is care work for relatives experiencing health problems. I could send you a dozen references, in which you could find dozens more, that put exact dollar figures on it.

Conservative estimates have put it anywhere between ten and—there are some wild estimates—as much as half of the GDP, you could almost put. Now, that's all of home work, half of which I would argue is care work. If you work with the numbers, you can find that this is an enormous amount of value in which we don't train, we don't support, and we obviously don't pay.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I think it's an area we need to do further work in. We could, for instance, collate the myriad studies out there and bring them into some kind of summary so that I as an MP or our officials could say here's the evidence, now let's do something about it.

Mr. William Gleberzon: We've seen some studies—by the University of Alberta, for instance—that have suggested \$5 billion in savings.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

The Chair: I have a couple of questions before we close off.

To Mr. Sawchuk, in terms of foreign credentials, yesterday when we were in Quebec we heard that, as you alluded to earlier—or maybe it was you, Karen—we do have the provinces responsible for foreign credential recognition. One concern this individual had was that as we look at trying to form a national foreign credentials organization, it's really the provinces that are deciding.

Talk to me about duplication. Do you have some concerns there? I realize that we're trying to do something that's going to move forward and address those issues, but there's also the possibility of duplication. I wonder what your thoughts are on what we're proposing, and then possibly how that affects things provincially and nationally.

Mr. Peter Sawchuk: I'm not sure what you're proposing, but definitely, as Karen said, literally hundreds of studies have accumulated over 20 years on the incoherence across jurisdictions and on the lack of coherence between immigration and labour market policies. Karen said that we don't have an economic policy here. In some ways, the closest we get is human resources

development. That's the closest we get to an economic policy here, and that's a real problem.

At one point I mentioned the need for a federal-provincial-territorial group. That's absolutely crucial. The answers are out there. A committee of that type could bring in a core group of people. You would have not just the support—my end of it is more the research support side—but an equally powerful group of people who could give you very specific policy stuff.

We just had a conference on this, early in October, which the Toronto Training Board and the Centre for the Study of Education and Work organized. For me, one of the themes that came out there was that there's an enormous amount of research and answers out there. They just have to be brought together.

Then there's the very difficult and sticky question of getting control of the occupational regulation bodies. Equally sticky, as I said, is getting immigration to talk to ministries of labour.

• (1145)

The Chair: Fair enough. I guess one of the recommendations to come out of the report is this provincial-territorial working group that, as you said, is a no-brainer to get people talking about some of these things. I guess it's appreciated that we're probably going to have issues when we start dealing with associations and provinces and so on. Maybe we can knock off some low-hanging fruit that make some sense and that actually will produce results.

To Bill and Judy, I want to thank you guys for the work you do with CARP. It's great work. We heard in St. John's and Halifax about ageism. Ageism concerns me greatly. I don't think we treat seniors with the respect they deserve. I believe there's a brain trust there.

With all of these things that have been talked about, what is it going to take? Barring the fact that we have to get into crisis mode and realize that, yes, we have individuals who would like to work... and quite frankly, maybe it is only 20 hours a week. If someone is retiring, they probably don't want to work 40 hours a week.

I realize it's a bit of a convoluted question because there are so many different areas that are affected and can be influenced—through taxes, for example—but when it comes to ageism, what is it that we can do? People say “education”, but what is that? It's kind of difficult to get our head around in terms of what that may be.

So what would you suggest?

Ms. Judy Cutler: I think we need some political leadership. We don't see seniors or even older Canadians referred to very often. We don't have a seniors minister. We have a seniors secretariat that seems pretty ineffective right now. We don't have a seniors council, which was promised.

Governments across the country have to show some leadership in this area. In the Liberal leadership race now, we've met with some of the people, and we don't see seniors in their debate either. We need to start dealing with it.

Again, the Senate report will maybe open the way, but as Peter said, there are so many reports and studies gathering dust on shelves, we have to start taking them seriously and move from research to policy and not just accumulate information. It's government who could do it.

Mr. William Gleberzon: With due respect, I think there has to be a change of perspective by politicians to go beyond the three-, four-, or five-year framework, in terms of what has to be done.

We're talking about the reality that the nature of this country, and the world, in many parts, is going to be fundamentally changed. Because we're going to have a lot more people with hair like mine—maybe more hair than mine, but a lot like it—one out of every four people. We're talking about an unprecedented reality that has never been experienced before, and that means—building on what Judy has said—if the politicians are prepared to say there is this new reality, we have to deal with it in all its manifestations. And when we talk about education, in a sense it might be—and I'll use a word that none of us likes to use—a kind of propaganda campaign to make people understand in very simple sound bites, very simple messages, that this is the new reality and these are people who are more than just nice old folks who did favours for us fifty years ago. These people are us—and not only us, but someone who's now 26, forty years from now.... They're just the same person at a different phase of their life.

So it's a whole different way of looking at things, a perspective that's needed. And I think it's possible. I don't think it's just pie-in-the-sky kind of stuff that I'm saying.

• (1150)

The Chair: I think that's an excellent point.

Go ahead, Judy.

Ms. Judy Cutler: It is a different perspective, but the way to embrace the ageing population is to provide opportunities to engage them so that they can show that ageism is not warranted, that all the myths are just that—myths.

Just to talk about it is one thing, but we have to provide opportunities for active living, for lifelong learning, for participation

and engagement in communities and society and industry and whatever.

The Chair: That's fair enough. I just sort of paraphrased it before. When we're talking about ageism, it's not just an advertising campaign. It's demonstrating through leadership at all levels of government that we do care about this segment and we're prepared to work by giving it the profile it deserves. It's also making sure there's a conduit to receive feedback to be able to act on some of these things that are important, which, in effect, would show society that we're serious, governments are serious about dealing with not only ageism but all the other issues that come with this ageing population.

Ms. Judy Cutler: But it's in a positive and constructive way, not just telling everyone to say “There, there, dear” and that type of thing.

The Chair: Yes, for sure.

Ms. Judy Cutler: They have a lot to contribute. My point is let them contribute.

Mr. William Gleberzon: And there's the reality, which I guess you're investigating, that they must contribute—and not just in employment, but at so many levels, because they are going to be a sizeable percentage of the population. The baby boomers have always been accustomed to having society dance to their tune, and there is probably no reason to believe that if they're out to pasture, they won't do even more of the same. So it's doing everyone a favour to make sure they have opportunities to become engaged.

The Chair: That's excellent.

In conclusion, I do want to thank everyone for being here. I think you realize that every one of your organizations deserves its own time and its own perspective. As we look at employability, we do realize it crosses many different boundaries. If I didn't hear it once, I heard two or three times that every issue does cross jurisdictional lines, and we need to look at working together with all departments; it doesn't just happen in isolation.

Thank you for being here and participating, and we wish you all the best.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.