HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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

HUMA • NUMBER 016 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, December 1, 2011

Chair

Mr. Ed Komarnicki

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

Thursday, December 1, 2011

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I see that Rodger Cuzner has arrived. That's a signal we can start now. But we'll give him a little bit of time, as I speak. I just have a couple of preliminary matters I want to raise with you before we start.

Visiting with us is a committee of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, which is responsible for legislative work pertaining to higher education. They would like to obtain information on the correlation between the national policy framework for higher education and the university and college quality assurance processes in Canada. In particular, they want to meet with members of this committee to discuss topics related to the processes of quality assurance in post-secondary education. Of course, it's a bit of a provincial matter, but I'm sure they'll have other matters to ask us about.

That's going to happen on Thursday, December 8, at 11 o'clock on the seventh floor of this building. For those of you who can make it, that would be great. For those of you who can't, that's fine. I'll be here. Perhaps we'll also have the analysts here, as well as the clerk. The clerk will give you a formal invitation. I just wanted to raise that with you.

We'll also have a budget presented probably next week at our Tuesday or Thursday meeting, depending on when it's available, for this aspect of the study.

Those are my preliminary remarks.

Of course, our study deals with skills development in remote rural communities in an era of fiscal restraint. It was, in part, inspired by the report entitled “The Business Case for Investing in Canada's Remote Communities”, authored by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

We're happy to have with us today the director of policy for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the director of parliamentary relations. We have two panels. We will have either one of you or both of you present for five to ten minutes, and then we will have rounds of questioning of five minutes, alternating between the parties.

That being said, you can start your presentation.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne (Director, Parliamentary Relations, Canadian Chamber of Commerce): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, honourable members, for this opportunity to be with you this afternoon.

My name is Susanna Cluff-Clyburne. I am the director of parliamentary affairs at the Canadian Chamber, and I wrote the paper we released in September entitled, “The Business Case for Investing in Canada's Remote Communities”.

I'm accompanied today by my colleague, Anne Argyris, who is the director of SME policy, skills, and immigration at the Canadian Chamber.

In a world with an increasing hunger for natural resources, the economic potential of Canada's remote communities is very much on the minds of Canada's businesses, governments, and community leaders.

Many remote communities face obstacles to attaining their potential, including distance from markets and the skilled workforce and critical infrastructure essential to business operations. An additional hurdle is the perception that public finances directed toward them are often considered to be subsidies rather than investments.

While governments must always be ready to play a role in the development of remote communities, looking at the challenges and opportunities of remote communities through a business lens can change the perception of subsidies, and more of Canada's remote communities can move closer to assuming equal economic footing with the rest of the country.

For that reason, GE Canada and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce decided to work together to seek businesses' perspectives on what it takes to draw more sustainable private sector investment into remote communities.

During the first half of 2011, GE Canada conducted an extensive consultation process, hosting round tables with business people and community leaders in 11 locations across Canada. They also conducted an online survey. Altogether, they heard from approximately 500 stakeholders. At the same time, the Canadian Chamber reached out to members from our local chamber network and companies in the financial services, energy, mining, and construction sectors. We also spoke with other stakeholders, including those who manage infrastructure in remote communities, and with people representing remote communities during the planning, construction, and operation of major infrastructure projects.

We heard that after a business determines that a community offers a product or group of products for which there is a market, one of the first investment considerations is whether or not there is a skilled workforce available locally, or that can be attracted to the community.

Nearly all of GE's round table participants acknowledged the education issues in remote communities, and many raised per capita funding of education as a factor in the difficulties these regions face. When funding is geared to population size, a small community is at a disadvantage. In order to provide the kind of education that will equip people with the skills employers need and to attract business investment, new funding models need to be explored and pursued.

The quality and level of participation in education are often linked to the degree of social problems in a community. Ensuring a strong commitment to education will make a huge difference in a remote community. In addition, provincial curricula developed for urban areas may not address the needs of sectors and trades that are useful to remote communities. Building closer working relationships between governments and businesses in this area was seen to be a step in the right direction.

The common thread was that labour is a complex and often expensive component of doing business in a remote community. Many of those we spoke with suggested that public policies concerning education, training, and labour supply should be re-examined from the standpoint of ensuring their closer tailoring to the unique needs of remote communities.

As many of Canada' s remote communities are aboriginal, the failure of the education system to graduate aboriginal youth from secondary school and to give them the opportunity for post-secondary education and training are considerable barriers to economic development. As you all know, secondary school graduation or its equivalent is usually the minimal level of education required by employers.

There are complex reasons for why education and training programs fail to bring the desired outcomes. One is a lack of focus and flexibility rather than funding. Education and training programs developed to meet provincial, territorial, and—in the case of aboriginal programs—national goals may not be focused or flexible enough to meet the needs of residents of remote communities and their prospective employers.

In some remote communities, it may not be possible to offer on-site training; and mentoring programs may be the most effective way to convey the skills required for a particular type of employment. In communities where there is no prospect of a major extractive or construction project, training, perhaps delivered online, in skills that can be used to deliver services remotely—for example, accounting, or web and graphic design—might be more appropriate.

● (1535)

Often, there is no option for residents of remote communities other than to relocate, even temporarily, to an urban centre to obtain higher education and training. Governments need to do more to help people from these communities prepare for life in an urban setting. There needs to be effective transition support for those leaving remote communities to pursue studies in urban centres.

Private sector partners can help develop a skilled workforce. To quote GE' s report on its consultations, "...there may be a need for businesses and governments to work more closely together in planning education infrastructure, and perhaps in funding arrangements as well."

Our paper mentions some best practices where government, business, and the community have worked successfully together with positive outcomes. Businesses themselves can play a significant role in developing a skilled workforce in remote communities by taking the time and making the effort to do more than what is legally required to consult with and engage local communities when planning, constructing, and operating major projects. Often, the knowledge gained from local communities can help projects proceed more quickly and inexpensively. Engaging communities early in a project can also provide the time required to leverage the potential of the local workforce.

While the challenges of bringing remote communities to their full economic potential can seem overwhelming, the opportunities for the communities themselves and for all Canadians are great. The private sector can play a significant role in making a reality what may seem unattainable if left to government alone.

Thank you. We would be happy to answer your questions.

● (1540)

The Chair: I take it that's the conclusion of your presentation, so we'll open it up to five-minute rounds of questioning, starting with Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): I want to thank you very much for the presentation and for the very good report.

I want to touch on a couple of points. One is the issue of subsidies versus investment. I have a couple of quotes.

I'm going to specifically talk about British Columbia, but this is applicable to rural and remote communities across Canada. I don't have the numbers for other rural and remote communities, but there are two pieces here. One is an article that was done by a professor at the University of Northern British Columbia. He indicates that in British Columbia, rural and remote communities generate the bulk of export wealth. I oftentimes think people believe that large cities are the economic drivers in a province, but he has numbers here that indicate the bulk of B.C.'s export wealth, which is the key to the province's past, present and future success, derives from rural and remote communities.

Another presentation, done by Jock Finlayson, reminded people of two things. He was quoting a report on regions' contributions to B. C.'s economic base, and he says that B.C.'s "...economic base has historically been, currently is, and will likely continue to be... predominantly dependent upon rural and resource activities such as forestry, fishing, farming, mining [and energy production]." He pointed out that large cities actually benefit from rural and remote development because those resource firms purchase several billion dollars per year in business inputs from GVRD suppliers—the Greater Vancouver Regional District—such as engineering, legal and accounting, finance, advertising, and executive search firms, and so on.

I wonder if, in your round table and from your discussions with people, you have anything more quantitative to say about the economic contribution that rural and remote communities make to those large urban centres and the overall economy in Canada, and why it's important that the recommendations in your report be looked at quite seriously in terms of that piece around the economic drivers.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: The reports you've cited are consistent with what we heard both from the round tables that GE conducted and from the outreach that I did on behalf of the Canadian Chamber. It was pretty clear that the collective well-being of the country depends on our ability to think of remote communities differently from the way that most, but not all, Canadians think of them today.

There is a great deal of data in the first part of the report that talks about the contribution to the Canadian economy of the natural resource sector. I can go digging for it, but that probably wouldn't be a productive use of everyone's time.

What makes compelling the arguments about looking at remote communities differently is the fact that the natural resources the world is beating a path to our door for are becoming more and more difficult to retrieve easily, so remote communities are becoming more and more important. We have to go looking farther and farther afield for these natural resources. That is very much consistent with our perspective.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Looking at the list of recommendations helpfully summarized at the back of the report, does this whole list, in your view, have to be implemented as a package? I know the steps might be staged. If not, are there some priorities you would set out of that list of recommendations?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: The simple answer to your question is no, they do not have to be implemented all at once.

The basic premise of the paper was that there is some work to be done by the government in research, analysis, and communication around remote communities, and we realize that is a very long-term commitment. The recommendations in the paper are shorter-term measures that we believe the federal government could take, working either alone or with the provinces and territories, and with business, of course, given that's our constituency, to move some of these issues ahead.

I would say, from our perspective, if there were priorities they would probably be on the skills and training side, because there's obviously a lot of spillover from skills and training into a lot of other social issues in remote communities.

● (1545)

Ms. Jean Crowder: On the skills and training end, of course your report and others also identified the challenges of providing education and training in rural and remote communities. One problem you identified was the per capita funding formulas. I know that in first nations communities, especially on-reserve communities, it's an enormous problem, because they're underfunded on a per capita basis compared to provincial schools.

The other issue is that even getting people to graduate from grade 12 to take advantage of post-secondary educations is an enormous challenge for many of these communities, because they simply don't have the infrastructure around education. I know you've touched on some of that, but in your actual report, a lot of what you've touched on seems to be post-grade 12. Do you have any recommendations around contributing to graduating students from grade 12, aside from the per capita funding issue?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Well, it's interesting you should mention that, because we also did a submission to the first nations panel on elementary and secondary education, and we did have some recommendations around that. Of course, one of those recommendations concerns the gap that exists in the funding of students on reserves. There are various estimates of anywhere from $2,000 per student and up.

If you'll excuse me, I'll just go to my submission, which I brought with me.

In order to encourage all aboriginal students—not necessarily only those living on reserves—to look positively toward post-secondary education, we have another recommendation. In a lot of cases, there's a lot of trepidation around leaving the community and going into an urban centre, so something that government—be it federal, depending on jurisdiction, or provincial and territorial—needs to look at is partnering with post-secondary educational institutions. Prospective high school graduates could be brought into urban locations, just on a temporary basis for a couple of weeks, to get a sense of what life is like there, because, as I'm sure everyone around the table has heard, there are a lot of cases where people just can't cope with urban life.

We also felt there needs to be a partnership—and we suggest that the federal government could take the lead on this—in bringing some of the key deliverers of K to 12 education together around the table, whether aboriginal or non-aboriginal. The people who have experience in delivering elementary and post-secondary education to remote communities, could then talk about best practices and, hopefully, propagate those more broadly throughout the country.

The Chair: Thank you for that. We will move to Mr. Shory.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming this afternoon. Also thank you very much for the report and the time the chamber put into preparing the report. It's worth reading. I had a chance to skim through it once, but I picked up some points that are very interesting and helpful.

For example, you suggested that federal programs should be flexible. Then you talked about encouraging private investments. Also, you talked about public-private partnerships, which was very important and interesting.

I am sure you are aware that along the same lines, Minister Lebel made an announcement yesterday that he has launched a program for a formal engagement process that will bring together the Government of Canada, provinces, territories, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and others to develop a new long-term plan for public infrastructure.

We all know we are going through fiscally restrained times, and I picked up these measures because they'll be very helpful—at least in my view. I'd like you to make some comments on all of the measures the minister is taking. Based on your recommendations, how will these measures benefit us in the long term?

● (1550)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Sorry, which measures do you mean?

Mr. Devinder Shory: How would they benefit us in the long term?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Do you mean the recommendations in our paper?

Mr. Devinder Shory: I mean those and the minister's.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I know the announcement took place, but I'm not familiar with the details, so I'm sorry but I can't comment on them.

The Chair: I think Mr. Shory identified three or so areas that were of interest to him, so if you could comment on those specifically and any others that are related, that would be good.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Certainly.

We are very committed to the notion of public-private partnerships in the delivery of infrastructure, so we would be very supportive of the announcement made by the minister yesterday to the degree to which those are a component of it. We are on the record as saying that we believe—and this is one of the key themes of our paper—that the private sector can often bring efficiencies and perspectives to the delivery of infrastructure, including skills and training, that government alone might have a little more difficulty delivering in a timely fashion.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Can you give some specific examples that will help us understand what exactly these are?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: In writing the paper, we were very conscious of the fact that we are in an environment of deficit reduction, and so we tried to keep our recommendations to low- or relatively no-cost measures. But there is a section of the paper devoted to partnerships. In it there's a wonderful example of the Baffin Fisheries Coalition, to which an additional fishing quota was granted about 10 or 11 years ago on Baffin Island. There wasn't the infrastructure, in terms of fishing boats and wharfs and so on, to support the growth in the fishery. So a gentleman by the name of Jerry Ward, the head of the Baffin Fisheries Coalition, was able to locate surplus infrastructure in Newfoundland, where there was infrastructure but no, or relatively few, fish. They teamed up and have been a great success, in terms of both infrastructure and the skills and training benefits that have accrued through the wealth generation that's come about as a result of that partnership.

That's one example.

Mr. Devinder Shory: You also talked about a regulatory red tape reduction, which I found interesting, and there was a recommendation.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Yes we did.

Mr. Devinder Shory: I wanted to explore that a little bit. When you talk about reduction of red tape, are you talking about having one shop or one office to deal with all the levels? What are you talking about?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Maybe I'll hand that over to Anne, because she wrote our submission to the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

Ms. Anne Argyris (Director, SME Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce): We have been very active in pushing for the elimination of red tape, not just in the paper that was written by Susanna but also in a number of areas. We made a formal written submission to the Red Tape Reduction Commission, and touched on various areas that were subject to red tape, including immigration. Companies are having problems trying to access the foreign workers they need to fill their positions; it takes them a long time, and it's a very difficult and complicated process.

We talked about red tape reduction in the area of taxation, which is also a very complex area for companies. We looked at it from the point of view of small businesses, because most of the members of our network are small businesses, which spend a lot of time and resources trying to meet the requirements of red tape, trying to comply with it and understand it.

We talked about red tape in areas like climate change and environmental assessment and how those are based on a number of different regulations in different provinces. If you're a company operating in more than one province, it becomes a very difficult issue and is very complicated to comply with.

We talked about red tape in the area of tourism, because we have problems attracting tourists to Canada. The number of tourists has fallen tremendously over the years. Even though Canada has a lot to offer in tourism, we are losing ground in that area because of taxation and the fact that we have very high costs.

There were a number of other areas. I don't know if you'd like me to mention the others, but I think you get the general idea.

● (1555)

The Chair: That's a good listing of them. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Shory.

We'll now move to Ms. Perreault.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Good afternoon. I want to thank you for joining us this afternoon.

Your report talks about issues that must be addressed. It says that it is more difficult to create sustainable business opportunities in remote communities.

I thought that your report was very interesting, but I noticed that it made little mention of how women are doing in remote regions. Actually, that is often where men predominate in industry, construction and forestry jobs.

Could you tell me whether your research has helped you identify any issues in terms of women's employability and skill development in remote regions?

[*English*]

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: In answer to your first question, we were talking about probably the most remote of remote areas, where there probably isn't a lot of agricultural activity. The exception to that would be the example that we cited, Swan Valley in Manitoba, which lost two major employment opportunities because of its lack of rail infrastructure. One was in the canola crushing industry.

In terms of women, we had a wonderful example, again from Nunavut, of women coming together to develop best practices and create tools for women who want to create their own small and medium sized enterprises. They were proposing something we thought that the government could look at as a model for some type of an online tool kit for entrepreneurs in remote communities, who might have issues around financing, financial literacy, marketing, and those kinds of thing. That was the only specific example we had with regard to women.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Do you think there is anything the federal government could do to improve women's access to skill development programs in remote areas?

[*English*]

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Again, with the exception of that one particular example, our suggestions were global, for both men and women.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: If I have any time left, I want to share it.

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Thank you for being here.

This was a great report. You've really highlighted something the NDP has been in favour of for quite some time, which is improving the funding for first nations education.

You talked about the development that is starting to occur in the north. Companies are having to go farther north and they're looking farther north. There's been an increase in first nations. They're the fastest growing population in Canada, and we need to ensure that we work in conjunction with them. I think they'd be able to fill the big void in the skills needed at this point.

I'm just wondering if, when you were doing the report—or if you've done another report in which—you considered guidelines for partnerships with first nations and the importance of those to ensuring that first nations get just as much of a piece of the pie as others do. I ask because this is not just about the skills and training, but also about the infrastructure that needs to be in place to bring those companies there. If there's no place to live, if there's no place to shop, if.... We just have to look at Attawapiskat. Although the deal that was struck with De Beers was beneficial to a certain extent, they still didn't get the best deal there. I'm just wondering if you've looked at that and at the training that could be had with respect to those companies.

● (1600)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Actually, I did do a paper late last year on measures that we believed the federal government could take to improve the relationships between the private sector and aboriginal businesses.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Would you be able to send us a copy?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I would be delighted to.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Is it bilingual?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Yes, it's available in both languages. So I'll send it to you.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Perfect.

Could you also send the other report you mentioned to Jean earlier?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: You mean the submission we did to the first nations panel?

Yes, of course. I'd be happy to.

So what we were looking at—just going back to the point about the funding for first nations education—is actually a policy resolution that the Canadian business community has endorsed. It's been endorsed by the 400, and also by some local chambers of commerce who are members of the Canadian Chamber. It's becoming very apparent that the potential of Canada's aboriginal workforce is becoming extremely important. Immigration is very important, but we have this tremendously fast-growing, young workforce. I believe 400,000 people of aboriginal roots are due to join the workforce in the next eight to ten years, and so we also have a great potential here to develop homegrown expertise.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I just want to add something here. Based on what you've just said, it's imperative that the government work at making sure their relationship with first nations is addressed as soon as possible.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I'm not going to comment on that. I mean we have—

The Chair: That's fair. It would be difficult for you to comment on that.

Your time is up. If you have a short concluding—

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Sorry. Maybe I just didn't word that properly.

The Chair: —remark, that's fine, and we'll move to Mr. Gill.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: No, I don't. I've said everything I need to say. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Gill.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being with us this afternoon and for providing us with this wonderful and valuable information.

I'm wondering if you can highlight some previous success stories that you feel provide a good model for government agencies, working hand in hand with the private sector, to develop remote rural communities.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I'd be happy to. We actually have some examples in the paper. I'd be happy to outline some of those with you. Again, most of these tend to be in the northern territories. We are actually embarking upon a study that will focus on the three territories over the next year or so.

There is an organization called the Yukon Mining Training Association, which involved HRSDC's ASEP program as well as first nations and employers. Again, they are looking not only at first nations but also at all Yukoners and are working together to develop skills for the extractive sector in the Yukon. They've had some very good results.

In Nunavut, we've also had the experience of the Agnico-Eagle mine. Again, in that region, the Kivalliq Mine Training Society does receive some support from HRSDC. It involves the Nunavut government, Agnico-Eagle itself, and the Nunavut Arctic College.

There has been quite a lot of success working in the high school; there's a training program within the local high school. There are now about 70 people who have come out of that partnership and are working at the Agnico-Eagle mine in Baker Lake.

Mr. Parm Gill: Would you be able to give us some key components of some of those programs?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I'm sorry: key components of those programs...?

Mr. Parm Gill: Yes, the components of those that have been successful—the recommendations that are in your report.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Maybe I'm misunderstanding your question. I haven't been directly involved with the programs. I know of them. We've been told about them by businesses in the Yukon and Nunavut. If you want more details, I'd be happy to make that connection for you.

● (1605)

Mr. Parm Gill: Okay. I'm also wondering if you have any additional non-monetary suggestions that you feel could encourage the private sector to get involved in the development of remote and rural communities.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Well, again, as we suggest in the paper, I think the notion of partnerships, whether it be P3s or some type of forum that the government makes happen and that creates the ability to come together for those with infrastructure needs and those who perhaps have excess infrastructure they don't need.... That's one of the proposals in the report. We think that would be relatively low cost and/or of no cost for the government, but it could create a wonderful ability for people to do what they did on Baffin Island with the fishing coalition.

Mr. Parm Gill: Are there programs the federal government has that could be re-engineered to be more effective without increasing the budget of these programs?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I don't have any specifics on that. There certainly are some, and I'm speaking more from the aspect of HRSDC programs targeted to aboriginal skills and training, but we do feel that there needs to be more involvement of business. One of the programs—I believe it's ASETS—is actually due to wind up next year. I guess we would encourage the government to take a look at some of those programs and how business could become more involved in helping them be more effective.

Mr. Parm Gill: Are there any federal programs that you think are particularly successful?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Again, we've identified HRSDC's support through the ASEP program for these private community-government partnerships—for example, the Yukon Mining Training Association. Actually, there was an example back several years ago, to go back to the Baffin fishing coalition. Fisheries and Oceans wasn't able to provide funding to them, but was able to provide some mapping for the fishery.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Thanks very much for being here today.

I want to commend you because I'm familiar with the Baffin Island success. That was a neat project in the way it evolved. There was no real human resource infrastructure in the commercial fishery, or it was very, very limited—and as well, the vessels and all the gear and that.

There's one thing where I think they were successful. Maybe this will come out through the study, but if we want some hands-on training and mentoring—which you mentioned was an important thing—and if there's a P3 going forward as part of that business plan, they can factor in used equipment. For many of the federal programs, if you're going to acquire specific equipment, there's a condition that it be new equipment. But I think one of the successes of the Baffin Island program, which you're familiar with, was that this was used gear for the most part, wasn't it?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Yes. They started out with equipment from the Newfoundland fishery, and they've gone on now to purchase two factory freezer trawlers, one of which they own 100% and the other one, I believe, they own the majority share in—so, yes, absolutely.

Another thing with regard to infrastructure in Nunavut is that when the government is making infrastructure investments—and the example of the military deep sea port at Nanisivik came up—it should consider commercial applications as well, so those will be factored into it. This could be a no-cost measure.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Absolutely, it should. I think it's also essential that used equipment and used assets factor in and be eligible for support as components of that commercial application.

There were a couple other aspects of the study. It's essential that we improve the outcomes in secondary education even before we get to post-secondary education. We're all very much aware of the gap in funding between first nations communities and non-first nations communities.

Do you think it's essential that the gap be closed in order to really realize success in that area?

● (1610)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Yes I do, although we're not advocating incremental spending—let's be clear on that. The Canadian Chamber is very much on the record as supporting the elimination of the deficit, so I guess we would suggest that the funding formula be re-examined.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You mean the financial deficit?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I'm sorry?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You're looking at the elimination of the financial deficit?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: That's correct.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You do not necessarily mean the human deficit in education?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: That's important as well.

I'm suggesting that the funding formula be re-examined with a view to eliminating that gap for first nations schools.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I guess I should have asked the presenters this on Tuesday, but do you have an overview of the situation regarding access to broadband in rural and remote communities? Are we close at all?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: It depends on where you are.

I couldn't give you an exact number. Again, it depends on whom you talk to. If you're talking to people in Nunavut, there are some concerns with the technology that's being used.

We do talk about broadband and its importance as an element of critical infrastructure, both for getting business into remote communities—because when you're in an urban setting or even in a non-urban setting, broadband service is taken for granted—and from an educational perspective. It's also important from a social perspective of connecting people, of making people in remote communities feel they're connected to the rest of the world, so that they're part of the culture, that they know what's going on and are part of it.

We did propose in the paper that the government take a look at perhaps re-thinking some procurement strategies and allowing different companies to come in and bid on the same component of broadband delivery, and at using different technologies and continuing to act as a lead user—which it has been in broadband—in the delivery of services and that kind of thing, to encourage uptake in usage.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I'll just ask one parting question.

As this study goes forward, what would be the key components that you would cite, if we want to improve our success with investing in training opportunities here?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: If we're being specific to education and training, I think perhaps we should be a bit more focused when we look at the needs of remote communities. We did hear from some of the business people that there is a tendency to want to trot everybody down to southern Canada for heavy equipment training, only for them to return to their community and find out that there's never going to be a mine or anything. This results in some frustrations. So the training that is promoted in certain communities should be focused to reflect the realities of that community.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: It's like the chicken and the egg: They need the people, but....

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Absolutely, so that would be number one.

Number two is looking at alternative ways of delivering skills and training, of not necessarily having on-site training and not necessarily having to take people out of the community, but looking at technology.

I think number three would be some of the peripheral issues of a social nature around why people don't complete high school, which can be anything from health care issues to housing. As you know, if you live in a house that's crowded and you can't study, then your success rate is not going to be that high.

I would say that those would be the three top ones.

The Chair: Thank you.

I noticed that in your recommendations you talk a lot about providing tools for Canadian businesses and stakeholders. I know that Mr. Cuzner mentioned broadband and making sure that it was available, and you talk about single points of contact where businesses can obtain regulatory information. Then you talk a whole lot about how that might be improved in connecting businesses together so they could learn best practices. Can you comment on those issues?

● (1615)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: For sure. This has come up in a couple of pieces of work the chamber has done in bringing together non-aboriginal and aboriginal business.

Again, we think the government could play a role, either through Industry Canada's small business branch creating online portals for businesses to access the tool kits that we talked about—something along the lines of what the small business women's group is doing in Nunavut—or in bringing people together from the private sector in remote communities and bringing in the youth. It doesn't necessarily have to be in person; there is a lot of technology available, assuming they have some type of Internet connection.

We think there are a lot of possibilities there, not only in creating the tools but also in making sure that the tool box is kept updated. Of course, we would advocate seeking the business community's input on what those tools should be, because that will help make them appropriate, and also on communicating them.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Butt.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, ladies, for being here today. I appreciate it.

I appreciate the work the chamber is doing and also its help for us. I think it's always helpful when we have organizations that take it upon themselves to do a study, to survey its members—and here, obviously, its members across the country—and provide those of us in the federal government with some valuable ideas to think about.

I think we all know that we have a challenge in this area; there is no doubt about it. I can't say I'm an expert on remote communities in Canada, representing as I do a suburban riding outside of Toronto, but I work with many of the small businesses in my riding, and I know they find challenges in those communities as well.

When we talk about remote communities, I'm still not quite sure, when I look over the list of recommendations, that I see any very specific things that the federal government should do, beyond the aboriginal issue, which you've highlighted in terms of education—which I get, and I think the other members have talked about. But I'm still trying to determine within your report the specific things that the federal government, in your view, should be doing that we are not doing. Or are there things we are doing that we should not be doing, in order to make investing in and running businesses more attractive in remote communities throughout the country?

Do you have one or two specific things that we're doing that we shouldn't be doing, where your advice would be to get out of the way and let you do your bit; or things that we absolutely and very clearly, within the federal jurisdiction, should be doing to help facilitate economic growth and new business opportunities in these remote communities?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I don't really have anything specific to say in terms of what the government should not be doing, but in terms of what we think government should be doing—and this won't surprise you, given our constituency—we think that business should be part of the conversation, perhaps a bit more than it is today, whether it be about skills and training or infrastructure investment. As we said, we think business has a lot to bring to the table in reducing costs and bringing efficiencies and those sorts of things.

I think the plea here—and again, this isn't new from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce—is to make business a part of the conversation, because we believe we have a contribution to make.

Mr. Brad Butt: Did you look at any of the impediments or difficulties? Again, it's the same thing for the provincial and territorial levels of government. Are there things there that are impediments to having greater business success in these communities, which the provinces and territories perhaps are doing and for which the federal government could play a better coordinating role?

I'll give you an example. A friend of mine has a steel fabrication business out in Mississauga. He was doing the demolition work at the old Maple Leaf Gardens, under his Workplace Safety and Insurance Board certificate, with his very highly trained guys. There was no issue with that.

The next contract he got was to build a 400,000-square foot Loblaws storage and warehousing facility in Regina. He got his guys and went over there. He told me that because of the red tape and nonsense he had to put up with—basically for exactly the same work he did in the province of Ontario, which he was now trying to do in Regina—his project was delayed by months and months. It was because of all the certifications and everything else he had to get for the guys who had the exact same skill set to do the same kind of project in Regina they had done in downtown Toronto.

Did you look at any of the provincial impediments that might make businesses that would otherwise invest in these communities decide that doing so would not be worth their while?

● (1620)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Perhaps we should have a separate conversation on interprovincial barriers to trade, because that's long been a focus of the Canadian Chamber, but it wasn't a focus of this paper. This focus was on the federal government, but I'd be happy to send you some material. We have lots. It's very frustrating.

Mr. Brad Butt: I know we're not going to solve this question today, but do you believe the federal government should try to play a coordinating role around that? Is that a big enough impediment?

We're very leery about sticking our nose into provincial jurisdictions, getting into a turf war, and all of that kind of stuff. I don't really have the appetite to do that, but sometimes.... For example, our committee just finished doing a study on foreign credentialling. We found that the pan-Canadian framework for getting provinces to recognize credentials across the country in many different disciplines has actually worked really well. The federal government showed leadership in that.

I'm wondering if there's a role for us to play at the federal level in skills development, credential recognition, certifications, and other things so that businesses can move a lot more easily from province to province, territory to territory, to actually invest in these communities, to create jobs, and to run successful businesses.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: The short answer is yes, we do. The Canadian Chamber has been on this issue for several years. A lot has been accomplished, but there is still some work to do.

The Chair: I'm not sure if Regina was a particularly good example. We'll have to check into those facts. There must be more to that story.

Having said that, we'll move on to Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I just want to make a quick comment about broadband before I ask a question.

My riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan wouldn't normally be called rural and remote, but there are a significant number of people in my riding who do not have access to high speed Internet. In some cases, they have the line running 100 feet from their property line, but the cost to have it hooked up is prohibitive. There are home-based business operating with access to dial-up. It's outrageous.

You made a comment about developing partnerships. I wonder if, in your experience or from comments you may have heard from businesses that are developing partnerships, the timelines for government support, whatever they might be, were long enough to have partnerships actually develop and come to fruition.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: I don't want to harp on the same issue, but looking back at the Baffin Island example, I think the answer would be yes. Even though the government didn't necessarily have money to hand over, it certainly had in-kind support that turned out to be very valuable to the initiative.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I know that in some other studies I've looked at, one of the biggest challenges with community economic development has always been that there's not a long enough window. Sometimes, especially in rural and remote communities, it takes a little longer for things to happen. Sometimes it's just access to goods and services. Sometimes the timelines simply aren't long enough to see the project become successful. I don't know if you've heard anything about that.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: No, we haven't.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have a quick question about value added. I did find the numbers in your report. One of them was that commodities represent one-third of Canada's exports—and that, of course, includes forestry products. Later in your report you specifically talked about value added. You cited the fact that the Chilean government created the National Innovation Council for Competitiveness, with national policy clusters for the mining, food services, and tourism sectors. This was around value added. If you want to refer to that, it's on page 34 in the report.

How closely did you look at the Chilean model? Were there specific things there that you thought would be a good for us to pay attention to in terms of value added?

● (1625)

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: We get into this in that same section of the report on adding value. It's the notion of sustainability in the creation of small and medium sized businesses that initially may be created around a particular major project or operation. The desire would be that they become sustainable, so that whenever the mine or whatever wraps up, the businesses don't all wrap up at the same time.

What we found particularly interesting about the Chilean example was that they started out by trying to create more value added in a cluster of SMEs around particular mining operations, enterprises that were, at the beginning, providing relatively low-value and low-skilled services to the mines. But the objective was to move the value chain up, so that not only would those companies grow but also that when the resource were no longer there, there would be more hope for these companies to actually be sustainable.

Ms. Jean Crowder: In fact, you're talking about capacity-building in a community.

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Absolutely. That's exactly what—

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have just one quick last question: did you look at other business models, like co-operatives?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: No, we did not—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay, so were any....? I ask this because I know that in the north, for example, there are some very successful co-operative models, whether they're employer/shareholder-owned co-ops or worker co-ops. They've been quite successful in some regions of the country.

So none of the people who came to the round tables or who were consulted were from the co-operative sector?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: Again, we do have Credit Union Central as one of our members, so yes, from the chamber, I did consult with them. I talked to the Swan Valley Credit Union in Manitoba, which talked about this unfortunate circumstance of not having a rail infrastructure in place to accommodate the two businesses that were coming in.

I would have to go back through the list of the 100-and-some people that GE had. Co-ops don't jump out at me, but that's not to say they weren't involved. There were academics and others involved. It's quite possible that there was somebody from one or more co-ops at the round table.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm about to suspend, but I see that Mr. Shory has a very short question. After a short response, we'll suspend.

Go ahead.

Mr. Devinder Shory: It's a very, very short question, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

I was reading the executive summary. Under “Remote communities' place in Canada”, it says that “Despite many sources of government support and significant federal spending directed at rural/remote areas of Canada, consistent progress in building strong self-sustaining remote communities is not evident”.

I just want you to give a quick comment. What is the reason for that, despite all of the spending and investments?

Ms. Susanna Cluff-Clyburne: As we got into in the paper, we saw that there was a lot of energy and focus, primarily through the regional economic development agencies. Again, as with education, it's not so much an issue of the money that's being put into it; our observation is that a lot of these agencies don't talk to each other as much as they could, necessarily. So I guess it's a situation where we felt that maybe the agencies could work a little better together and everybody would benefit as a result.

The Chair: With that, we'll suspend for five or ten minutes.

● (1625)

(Pause)

● (1635)

The Chair: Okay, we'll start now.

We're going to have three presenters: the Canadian Institute of Forestry; the Construction Sector Council, and Rosemary Sparks; and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We'd like to welcome all of them. We also have Bev Buckway, the mayor of the city of Whitehorse, as well as the chair of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Northern and Remote Forum; and Erin Hogan, a city council member .

Welcome to our committee. We'll have each of you present, and we'll start with Mr. John Pineau.

Mr. John Pineau (Executive Director, Canadian Institute of Forestry): Thank you.

On behalf of the membership of the Canadian Institute of Forestry —l'Institut forestier du Canada—and the Canadian Forestry Association, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. In my capacity as executive director, I am representing over 2,000 forest professionals and practitioners from across Canada. Our non-profit voluntary organizations work actively with all who have an interest in maintaining the health of Canadian forests and promoting a better understanding of forestry.

Our institute's mission is to promote excellence in forest stewardship and sustainability, based on the application of sound science and research. We also proactively organize and deliver opportunities for continuing education and professional development to all Canadian forest professionals and practitioners to help them maintain their competency. Through the Canadian Forestry Association, we promote forest education and public awareness with programs such as National Forest Week, Envirothon, and the Forest Capital of Canada. Our activities are driven by our passion for forests and our desire to help people in a constructive and positive manner.

Canada's publicly owned forests are unique in the world, as vast renewable resources controlled by the provincial governments, but generally leased out to private corporations or cooperative groups of companies. This system has produced many benefits for our citizens, including the creation of high-paying jobs; access for a variety of recreational uses; and annually, a positive balance of trade. However, to continue to receive these and other benefits, we need to ensure that we protect the ecological integrity of these forests, that is, to ensure the ecological functions of the forests are not impaired. The acceptance of sustainable forests as the key concept in the national forest strategy demonstrates that Canadians want their forests to maintain biological diversity, carbon storage, water regulation, and the other myriad benefits we obtain from them.

Forests can and must continue to play a major role in Canada's future economic, social, and environmental solutions. The majority —or some 90%—of Canada's forests are publicly owned. Investment in these resources must be considered a long-term environmental investment, with significant corollary social and economic benefits. Despite current global economic uncertainty and the underutilization of forests in many jurisdictions of what can be sustainably harvested, governments should look to investing in the renewal and maintenance of our publicly owned forests. This would immediately employ people across Canada—especially those living in small, remote, rural, forest-dependent communities—to grow, plant, and tend young forests. In the longer term, this investment would create wood products, bioenergy, and habitats for wildlife, as well as sequester carbon. Science is telling us that good forest management can have a net positive impact on carbon sequestration and, possibly, the mitigation of climate change.

Harvested areas, as well as areas depleted by natural causes such as fire, wind, insects, and disease—which is substantial, but varies annually—should be considered for more rigorous, large-scale regeneration programs. We recommend the development of sound plans for areas where forest regeneration is required, and the development of a national seed crop forecasting system to assist in the timing of site preparation and tending operations. Such an investment would be beneficial to many remote rural communities. Our members are also seriously concerned that Canada is losing its silvicultural and forest regeneration capacity and knowledge base, both of which are well-respected throughout the world. Thoughtful and strategic investment will help to reverse this situation. Our institute's recently announced collaboration with like-minded forestry organizations in China has been largely fostered by this positive Canadian forestry reputation. This is something we do not want to lose and cannot afford to lose.

While there are differences in the processes used in each province and territory to monitor and regulate forest activities, certain similarities are uniquely Canadian. Electronic data and analytical methods, for example, are fundamental components of forest management in Canada. Unlike many other forest nations, the management of Canada's forests is based on forest inventories created primarily through the use of digital aerial photography. These forest inventories are the principal data sets used in computer models to project changes in the structure and composition of forests due to harvesting, regeneration, growth, and mortality caused by aging, natural, and human-caused disturbances. These usages of interpreted data and virtual forest computer models are beneficial, as they enable us to efficiently test and compare a variety of different harvest regimes and regeneration scenarios over very large land masses. However, we must recognize their limitations, as well as our need, ability, and obligation to use new science tools and technologies to improve the quality of this derived data and to ensure both it and the rules used in sophisticated electronic tools are verified in the real world.

● (1640)

This again presents an opportunity to train young forest professionals and practitioners in remote communities to develop, produce, and use enhanced forest and natural resources inventories and the associated technologies.

Currently, the human resources capacity across Canada is quite limited in terms of forest inventory production, while the need for up-to-date, high-quality, enhanced, and accurate inventories has never been stronger, especially if we want to be competitive within the global forest products sector. Addressing this need proactively through training could create high-tech employment opportunities in numerous communities where forestry is a primary or sole employer.

Advances in remote sensing technology, including the use of multi-spectral digital imagery and LIDAR technology, must soon become a pervasive part of the tool kit that significantly improves forest and natural resources inventories, improves our competitive advantage, and allows for overall improvement in forest management planning and practice.

Creating a desired future forest condition requires investment in information, planning, implementation, monitoring, and research. Remote rural communities would not only benefit directly, as described, but could also potentially see a benefit in a new and more focused type of ecotourism that includes visits to and interpretation of forest science and research and development installations and sites. From our experience, public interest is considerable with respect to learning about modern forestry and interdisciplinary forest science.

The bioenergy sector, which is developing rapidly around the globe in response to a need to reduce the use of fossil fuels, also creates opportunities for remote rural communities. As a forest nation, Canada has the potential to become one of the world's largest producers of forest biofuels and bioenergy.

While the use of residual biomass from existing forest products processing is beginning to see use in energy production in some centres, many remote communities also have the opportunity and potential to become more self-sufficient in terms of their own energy requirements through the use of biomass or bioenergy, if provided with incentives and some measure of initial investment. Billions of dollars have been spent in Canada to foster bioenergy in general, and tens of millions of dollars have been committed by governments to develop bioenergy networks to foster establishment of conversion plants. Remote communities should be seeing some share of this type of investment funding, especially when considering that the proximity of available forest biomass should allow for reduced transportation costs.

The task of ensuring the sustainability of the forest resource while extracting more biomass has not received as much attention from government agencies and networks, even though this is needed to underpin a sustainable bioenergy sector. It is therefore imperative that emerging forest bioenergy guidelines, regulations, policies, and legislation covering increased removals of forest biomass be built on a solid knowledge of environmental sustainability, be relevant within the context of current and anticipated forest operations in different jurisdictions across Canada, and be consistent in principle within a global context. Enhanced forest and natural resources inventories, as already discussed, play a vital role in this respect.

Youth internship programs that provide opportunities for recent graduates to gain experience, knowledge, and a network of personal contacts are an excellent vehicle and should see expanded use across Canada, especially in remote rural communities. Our institute partners and affiliates have achieved significant success with these programs over the past decade, providing a year-long experience to over 40 young people, most of whom have succeeded in establishing good careers in government, industry, and other non-profits upon completion of their internships.

FedNor, Industry Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation have been our main funding agencies, and we recommend that the internship programs they offer be thoughtfully and strategically expanded to meet the challenges of remote communities, ideally within the context of our other recommendations. Given our own structure of 18 sections across Canada, with many of our members living and working in remote rural communities, we would like to offer our experience and expertise to help expand the scope, scale, and impact of youth internship programs.

On a personal note, I was recently a part of a Canadian delegation that visited China. At the Asia-Pacific forestry week conference in Beijing, we had the opportunity to meet many young people from different countries and heard first-hand how Asia-Pacific nations are currently ramping up educational opportunities for young people with respect to forestry and forests. We also heard from these young people their adamant belief that forestry was a future growth industry. One young Chinese forester said that in the past a young man would not apply to post-secondary forestry programs, as he would not make enough money to get a girlfriend. He said that this had changed, that forests and forestry were now seen as playing a major role in our environment and also for manufacturing, through the sustainable use of wood products and bioenergy. Many of these young forest professionals and practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region are coming from relatively remote rural communities themselves.

● (1645)

The Chair: Are you about ready to wind up there, Mr. Pineau?

Mr. John Pineau: Yes. I have one more paragraph, if that's okay.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. John Pineau: In conclusion, on behalf of our members, I again thank the committee. Our organizations feel that forests are a treasure and that forestry is not just a job but a passion. And...yes, the rest of it we can skip.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Well, you're certainly welcome to submit the rest of your remarks to the committee, or you may be able to deal with them in the rounds of questioning.

Go ahead, Ms. Sparks.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks (Executive Director, Construction Sector Council): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Construction Sector Council is a not-for-profit national organization that is led by industry and funded by the federal government. Our mandate is to identify and address the workforce challenges facing the construction industry across Canada.

The construction industry in Canada is once again in a period of growth following the recent downturn in the economy. This growth in construction investment will translate into growth in employment over the next decade. The Construction Sector Council's labour market information estimates that increased construction activity is going to result in employment growth of about 102,000 jobs across the 2011-19 period.

Added to this expansion in growth is the aging population. Our labour market analysis has estimated there will be a potential loss of 217,000 skilled workers to retirement over the next decade. So if we take a look at those two numbers—217,000 and 102,000—we have an issue of about 319,000 skilled workers that we're going to require over the next decade. Typically, all industries receive a certain portion of new entrants who come into the workforce every year, and construction will receive its share. This still is going to leave us, though, with a gap of about 158,000 workers over this next decade.

Major industrial and engineering projects are driving this new construction investment across Canada. Most of these projects are located in rural and remote areas, and securing the needed labour requirements will be a challenge. Investment in proposed major projects in rural or remote areas is expected to reach close to $200 billion over the decade.

In British Columbia, new mining, pipeline, port expansion, and hydroelectric projects in northern B.C. will drive growth over the next several years. Labour demands associated—

The Chair: Excuse me, Ms. Sparks. Could you slow down a bit? I understand the translators are having a difficult time keeping up with you.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: I will. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: Labour demands associated with that Alberta oil sands are well documented. Increased mining activity in Saskatchewan will mean a considerable demand for construction workers over the next few years. For Manitoba, there are multi-billion dollar hydro projects, while in northern Ontario there are the Ring of Fire mining developments, all of which will generate many job opportunities. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Lower Churchill hydro project and proposed mining project development will likely generate demands that exceed the available local labour force.

The labour requirement for these projects will be substantial and raises the challenge of recruiting and retaining required workers. Based on this data, the industry will need to use all measures to meet its needs. Programs that support hiring and retention of youth, aboriginal people, women, immigrants, and older workers will be critical.

Today I'm going to focus my comments on aboriginal people in rural and remote areas, although some of my comments will apply to anyone living in these areas.

In many instances, aboriginal people populate the areas in and around major construction projects in rural and remote areas. The construction industry has identified the engagement of aboriginal youth as a priority. Most recently, the owner community—the people who purchase construction services—has developed a strategy to address workforce challenges. In this strategy, engaging the aboriginal community has been identified as key a priority. The strategy states:

> The Aboriginal population is the fastest growing in Canada, nearly 50 percent of which is below the age of 25. This represents a significant pool of largely untapped labour. To maximize this resource, relevant stakeholders (industry, governments, Aboriginal leaders, community leaders, educators and trainers) at the regional level need to accommodate cultural differences and identify training needs. These activities must include cultural awareness training about the industry for Aboriginal youth and greater awareness of the Aboriginal cultures among the industry's workforce.

> Programs to promote training and employment in the skilled trades are needed before high school to encourage Aboriginal youth to consider these trades as a viable option. Job location can present [some] challenges. Industry cannot wait for major projects to drive demand for this source of labour. It must be proactive in Aboriginal schools and in the community to attract Aboriginal youth and prepare them for work before new major projects begin.

The Construction Sector Council has worked with the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy agreement holders over the past six years to forge linkages between aboriginal communities and the construction industry. The 80 ASET agreement holders have close to 400 points of service across Canada, are a direct link to aboriginal youth, and provide training and counselling—among other services—in their communities.

Through this work, we have learned a few lessons about working with aboriginal people in the area of skills development and employment for the construction industry. Some of those lessons learned are as follows.

First, connecting employers to the ASET agreement holders is an efficient way to forge linkages to find, train, and employ aboriginal youth.

Second, on-the-ground relationships at the local level are critical to creating successful employment and training models. This again includes the same group: owners, employers, labour, training providers, apprenticeship offices, ASET agreement holders, and government.

Third, it takes time to forge the relationships necessary to build trust and create change.

Fourth, skills training needs to be directly connected to employment. Ideally, this needs to happen while on the job, so there has to be a context for the training that's made available.

Fifth, in addition to job-specific skills training, there also needs to be training available to address basic employment skills, that is, the essential skills of every worker, in order for people to succeed in the workforce and to be able to benefit from training.

Sixth, on-the-job training needs to be built into construction contracting agreements, labour agreements, and other types of agreements.

Seventh, we need a long-term strategy that will raise awareness of employment opportunities, as well as short-term strategies that result in employment supported by training.

Eighth, there needs to be an appreciation of the time it takes to create a tradesperson. It takes a minimum of three to five years to create a skilled tradesperson.

Ninth, there must be an identified industry need, and employers need to be connected from the beginning to any initiatives that take place.

● (1650)

Tenth, there has to be collaboration amongst partners at all stages of any initiative—the planning, development, and operationalization stages.

Eleventh, job coaching and support for the employer and the employee are critical to retention.

Last, cross-cultural training of employers and aboriginal workers is critical.

There are some unique challenges when we're talking about remote and rural areas. Specialized training is often not available in those areas. Those living in these areas need to travel or relocate to access training. There are often difficulties with people not wanting to leave their communities to go to job sites or attend training. These difficulties are both practical, in terms of finances and accommodation, and personal, in terms of leaving the support of your community.

There are examples of successful cases of long-distance apprenticeship programs in northern Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. More people could benefit from this type of flexible and long-distance learning to bring training to the remote and rural communities. Anecdotally, it appears that the longer the period of time an individual has to be away from his or her community to take training, the less likely they are to complete that training.

Another challenge is the cultural shock that can be experienced on the job site. This, along with the isolation from family and friends, can impact the retention of aboriginal people. Employment and training opportunities that have more than one aboriginal person in attendance help to address the isolation issue. Cultural awareness training helps to provide an understanding of the workplace culture and helps employers understand the culture of aboriginal people.

● (1655)

The Chair: Again, we're getting well past your time. If you could bring it to a conclusion, we'd appreciate it.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: I will do that.

In conclusion, let me just say that remote and rural areas present unique challenges related to skills development and employment. There are many major construction projects taking place in these areas across Canada. Construction employers need either to access local workers or to bring in workers from other areas.

These major projects run for a finite period of time and then, in many cases, leave behind opportunities for maintaining those structures that have been built. So we need to think about skills development that not only enables the people who live in remote areas to participate in the construction of those buildings and structures, etc., but that also gives them the skills needed to maintain them afterwards.

I'll close there.

The Chair: Thank you.

I understand, Ms. Buckway, that you'll be sharing your time with Ms. Hogan.

Go ahead.

Ms. Bev Buckway (Board Member, Mayor, City of Whitehorse, Yukon, Chair of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Northern and Remote Forum, Federation of Canadian Municipalities): Mr. Chair, and committee members, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Northern Remote Forum.

The FCM is the voice of nearly 2,000 municipal members, representing approximately 90% of Canada's population. Rural and remote communities make up the majority of our members and are on the front lines of remote economic development, creating conditions to attract business and labour.

As the FCM pointed out in its 2010 report, *On the Front Lines*, infrastructure, particularly transportation infrastructure, is vital to lasting and diversified economic development in our remote communities. For businesses, good roads, rail systems, and airports mean that their products and process inputs can move in and out of communities more easily. Particularly in the northern context, it will be critical for this infrastructure to be climate resilient as we experience the impacts of climate change.

Reliable power supply and communications infrastructure are also important for business. I can speak first-hand to this vulnerability. This past summer, the city of Whitehorse, as well as communities in remote parts of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, lost access to all phone, Internet, cellular, and data services for almost half a day when a fibre optic cable was accidentally cut during construction in northern B.C. There were no cellphones, no ATMs, and no telephones. You couldn't gas up your car and use a card lock. Everything was shut down. That was the second time this has happened.

On the energy side, a majority of remote communities are cut off from the North American power grid. In some communities, this means total reliance on diesel for heat and/or electricity. This is a very unsustainable model that exposes our citizens—and the employers, of course—to high costs and a significant risk of a system failure, with very few alternatives.

The federal government has just committed to working with the provinces, the territories, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to develop a long-term infrastructure plan to replace the Building Canada fund when it expires in 2014. That was announced by Minister Lebel just yesterday. This plan will be a critical step forward for remote communities and will literally lay a foundation for other important economic development work.

I will turn now to my colleague.

Ms. Erin Hogan (Board Member, Councillor, City of Thompson, Manitoba, Federation of Canadian Municipalities): Thank you, Mayor Buckway.

As remote local governments across Canada can attest, economic development also requires conditions that attract and retain people with the needed knowledge and skills. On average, 84.6% of Canadians have access to a regular doctor, compared to 77.8% in the Yukon, 38.7% in the Northwest Territories, and 11.8% in Nunavut. Access to quality education is often limited in remote communities. Often many young people must leave their communities for higher education, and sometimes even for secondary education.

Finally, in many remote communities there is inadequate housing, with as many as twenty people living in one cramped home. This has led many employers to construct their own dormitory housing for workers. The net effect is twofold: First, businesses in remote communities often require skills the local residents do not have, causing local residents to lose out on the direct benefits of new opportunities; and second, living conditions are such that workers may not want to raise their families in remote communities, resulting in high turnover, workforce instability, and loss of corporate memory. This is bad for business, bad for communities, and particularly bad for Canada's north, where many new opportunities exist.

Many remote communities' economies are resource-driven and face unique challenges in planning for diversification. Last year, in my own city of Thompson, Manitoba, we received news that our largest employer, a mining company, was scheduled to close its smelting and refining operations there by 2015. Our community faced the prospect of losing 500 jobs in a community of 15,000, a sudden and significant loss of property value and, ultimately, unpredictability as to our community's sustainability.

Fortunately, we have risen to the challenge and, led by the municipality, Thompson has formed an economic diversification working group. The working group brings together stakeholders from all sectors, including the mining company and aboriginal organizations, to build a new future for Thompson.

We have done this on our own, but communities like Thompson and future resource-based communities could do more in partnership with the federal government. The federal government needs a strategy for partnership with resource-based communities to support economic diversification. It has an important role to play in supporting local efforts to attract new business, such as investments in core infrastructure, business development grants and tax incentives, education and skills training, and finally, capacity-building tools, particularly to assess diversification options in a given community.

Thank you.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation. We certainly appreciate your effort.

We're going to go into five-minute rounds, and I'll be watching it fairly closely so that we can almost complete the first round.

So go ahead, Ms. Hughes.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you.

If I have any time left, I'll be sharing it with Manon.

Thank you very much for your presentations.

It's obvious that what we're been hearing over and over again, not only at this committee but also at other committees, is the need to ensure there is proper support for first nations. You talked about 20 people living in a home. This is exactly what we're seeing in Attawapiskat as well. We have to realize that the amount of money that's actually being invested in an ordinary Canadian is almost $20,000 per person per year, compared to just $8,000 in Attawapiskat per person per year. We have to realize there is a deficiency there.

There was a lot of information given here and I'm struggling as to which questions I really should ask, but I think that even in difficult times savings cannot be achieved on the backs of our first people. Given the skilled-labour shortage, it is imperative that we recognize the potential of our first nation youth. As you indicated, the longer they're away from the community, the less likely they are to complete. That's why we have first nations communities in some areas that are really trying to bind together, to make sure that places like KTEI are able to try to deliver some courses. But, again, they can only deliver a limited amount of courses because they just don't have the infrastructure and the capacity to expand at this point.

Mr. Pineau, you talked about the forestry industry. I have lots of forest-industry communities in my area. I'm in northern Ontario, and I know how difficult it's been for Dubreuilville, for White River, for all of those communities who have had this shock of losing their single-industry town.

When you talked about the internship, it reminded me that some of my communities, since I've been elected, have been asking for a longer internship program. Even the Chamber of Commerce talked about this in their report here:

> Federal programs need to be flexible enough to accommodate the economic realities of individual communities and the alternate training models that may be required to deliver effective results.

On the internship programs, if they're only for a year, that person leaves and another one comes in, and it's a totally different program because they're not sure exactly what the other one had in mind.

So I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit more about that.

Mr. John Pineau: There are a lot of challenges in that respect. For me—and I'll be honest—it's a source of talented, young, energetic, inexpensive labour. I can get a lot done for our organizations that way, and I won't hide that.

The year-long duration is tough. You just get someone up to speed and they know what they're doing really well, and they're ready to go out. And I don't blame them, because they can usually get a good job, and a lot of them have, and they can be paid well and they can move somewhere, to a bigger centre or wherever. That is an issue.

Our interns have been in Mattawa mostly, and it's—

Mrs. Carol Hughes: If you had a choice with respect to the internship programs, how long would you say these would have to be to really be worth your while?

Mr. John Pineau: They are worth my while now, no doubt about it.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I mean to be truly effective.

● (1705)

Mr. John Pineau: I love the saying, “Piggies get fat, and hogs get slaughtered”. Three years would be perfect. Five years would be bad.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Okay, thank you.

I'll pass the time over to Manon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Good afternoon to the four of you.

My question is about women's employability. If I have understood correctly, a number of skill development programs are available in the workplace. However, women make up a small percentage of forestry and construction workers.

Are there any initiatives aimed at increasing the presence of women in those areas?

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would like to take that?

Ms. Sparks, go ahead. You have about 35 seconds to respond.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: I can cite one example from Alberta in particular, which I think is very effective. It's called Women Building Futures. This is a program designed to assist women by not only preparing them technically but also by preparing them to actually work in the environment of construction. Once a woman is prepared and ready to go on the work site, she works closely with the employers, who will employ her and support her through that initial stage and work to ensure her retention. It's a successful program.

The Chair: Only eight seconds remain, so I think we'll just stop there and turn it over to Mr. Mayes.

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

As a former mayor of Dawson City, Yukon, I am familiar with the challenges remote communities have. So I'm going to focus my first questions on some of the challenges to communities.

A lot of the northern communities are developed around resource development, whether that be forestry, oil and gas, or mineral extraction. There are some challenges with infrastructure in that regard. First of all, it's energy. There has to be an energy source that's reliable and inexpensive to a certain extent.

I know that our government in the Yukon, for instance, has spent a lot of money helping to provide money for transmission lines for the Mayo hydro project to take some of those smaller, remote communities off of diesel generation. It's good for the environment and it's also a more reliable source.

I'm on the energy caucus, and it was interesting to hear about a number of the potential mines that are trying to develop in Canada, which face challenges because they're remote and away from the grid, and about how they are going to get power to develop their finds.

Mayor Buckway, could you maybe discuss that a little bit? I know Yukon has five potential mines, and there are some challenges with regard to energy.

Ms. Bev Buckway: Thank you.

Yukon Energy recently made a presentation to us, and they indicated that if the four mines that were are to come on stream do come on stream, demand for energy will be doubled. And if the industrial enterprises that are off the grid want to come on, the demand will be tripled.

It sounds as though the mines will get precedence over some of that energy. Then the costs will fall back to some of the residents and the business owners if they don't get the primary power. We are greatly concerned about what some of the alternatives would be.

We're looking at some liquid natural gas up in the Eagle Plains area. We're not currently using that, but we're being forced to look at some alternative ways of looking at things. We've looked at some geothermal. We know that's expensive and risky. We do not have people from the south banging the doors down to say, “We're coming here in a partnership to do this”. We don't see that big thrust coming this way. So it could definitely become quite critical for us.

Mr. Colin Mayes: One of the very innovative things the Province of British Columbia did when the oil and gas industry boomed in the Fort St. John area was to actually take a portion of the royalties and provide it to Fort St. John to help with the infrastructure in the community.

Is any of that happening in the Yukon or in any of the northern communities that you know of?

Ms. Bev Buckway: Can you speak to that...?

Ms. Erin Hogan: No, I don't think so.

Ms. Bev Buckway: Not so much...?

Well, I think it varies from place to place. I know there are discussions continually about increased royalties and whatnot, but it depends on the area and on what the current regulations are as to exactly how it works. I think it varies so much that there is nothing standard, but if there were a revenue generator that would help improve the infrastructure.... It all helps, because with the remoteness, the difficulty, and the cost of freight to get things in, as you've said, it's all difficult.

● (1710)

Mr. Colin Mayes: I'd like to direct my next question to Madam Sparks.

One of the things the colleges in the Okanagan Valley have done is to put together skills training. For instance, they put the welding courses in a big van and move it to Salmon Arm, and then they have the plumbing one down in Kelowna and the electrical one in Penticton; they just leave them there for a year and then shift them around. It has been very successful.

Is anything like that model available? You mentioned first nations communities and the possibility of something like that going to a first nations community, being there for a period of time, and thus having another skill set being brought to that community. Are you aware of any of that?

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: I can't specifically talk about the idea of the truck moving into remote areas with the training on it, but there is work being done in northwestern Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec around this notion of bringing training to people, as opposed to people going to the training. Some of that I believe is distance education, as opposed to a physical vehicle pulling up with the equipment and the means to do the hands-on training.

All we've heard about those kinds of projects is that when they can get them functioning from a financial point of view, when it's successful as an economic vehicle for them to do that, they are successful in reaching the people and getting them trained.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayes.

We'll move to Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Chair, I wonder if we could ask the witnesses to provide the clerk with copies of their written presentations so that we could have them translated.

I know you didn't get to finish them all, and they were very thorough. There are some important things that we didn't get to, given that we only have a five-minute round to actually ask you questions.

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll ask you to do that, if you could. We would appreciate it.

Go ahead.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I want to thank all of you for coming.

I'm going to start with the FCM representative.

Ms. Hogan, you talked about what happens in some of our communities when our major industry shuts down and we're left reeling. My community certainly has experienced that as well, although it's not considered remote. We've had a sawmill shut down in a place called Youbou. That devastated the little village. It goes on and on.

It's interesting, though, what you've recommended. What Thompson is doing is of course very forward-thinking in terms of putting together this group and working together to look at the diversification and the impacts on the community.

Believe it or not, the federal government used to have a very good industrial adjustment program—and this is not partisan, because it was before your time—that brought together community partners, business, and labour, not only to deal with communities where resource industries were being shut down and to do the work around that, but also to deal with business start-ups. It's unfortunate.... I think your community needs to be applauded for taking on that work without any other support.

But I also think you highlight a very difficult problem. The chamber also raised this issue in terms of resource communities going through transition. You mentioned it in your briefing, but if you have any other comments about what works well with that, it would be helpful for us.

Ms. Erin Hogan: I think the main message we're trying to get across on the susceptibility of these communities to the boom-and-bust cycle—especially the resource-based ones—is that we need to be able to cushion this somehow. Really what we're proposing is that there needs to be strategic investment by the federal government in infrastructure in these communities to strengthen and diversify the north.

The best way to do that is for the federal government to consult with local municipalities and have us come to the table to negotiate those strategies. We know on the ground what core investments are the most efficient and will have the biggest impact on our communities. Really, we need to have that voice and input into this decision-making.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thanks, Ms. Hogan. I have to declare that I am a former municipal councillor, so I have a great deal of sympathy.

Mayor Buckway, I wanted to touch on this just briefly. My colleague, Ms. Hughes, just reminded me about the gas tax. I know that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has worked quite hard on getting fair representation for remote and rural communities, because the per capita basis simply doesn't work in our smaller communities. Is there something that needs to be done differently about that with the gas tax?

Ms. Bev Buckway: Thank you very much for that question.

The gas tax funding, as it's currently set up, worked very well for our municipalities across Canada, and we very much liked the set-up. When we're looking at a long-term infrastructure plan, it remains to be seen whether there's any hope of structuring that money, with whatever way the funding program would work in the long term, in the same way the gas tax fund worked. It gave municipalities direct input into how the money was spent, based on their priorities in the municipality. So it was very successful. We liked it very much, and we would really favour programs that work along that line.

● (1715)

Ms. Jean Crowder: I have two other quick questions, but in summary, I think what I'm hearing is that it's really important for our rural and smaller communities that you be at the table with regard to any funding formula, and that there needs to be a recognition that it can't be on a per capita basis.

Ms. Erin Hogan: Yes, I would agree with that.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Pineau, when the Canadian Chamber did their report, they recommended that Natural Resources Canada establish and fund a national round table on the value chain in the Canadian forestry industry. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. John Pineau: I think Natural Resources Canada, in general, is doing some really good work, particularly in the research area with FPInnovations and the Canadian Wood Fibre Centre.

I'm really pleased to see what's happening with looking at new ways of using use wood, and at turning our mills eventually, and looking at how we do everything in the value chain from harvesting right through to the product, by looking less at traditional milling and more at a biorefinery capacity. So you might have traditional products like pulp and paper, lumber, and those sorts of things, but you'd also have the bioenergy value added. Nanotechnology research is showing some promise. I'm really pleased with what the federal government is doing, and I think, if anything, it should keep going on and keep expanding that.

I'd like to see more from the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. That's a body that's has been a little quiet, but I think there's a lot of potential there. I'd like to see more activity and more coordination.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Crowder. Your time is done.

We'll now move to Mr. Alexander.

Go ahead.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Thank you so much, Chair.

Thanks for those presentations. They were really exciting and stimulating, especially for someone like me who usually sits on the national defence committee. It's great to hear about these domestic priorities that are so important in every community across the country.

I was struck in all of your presentations by a certain tension that all levels of government face and that all of you face. On the one hand, there is the imperative of getting the people to where the jobs are. In some cases these are new communities. Nunavut is going to be developing on a large scale for the first time, and Yukon is seeing mines opening after seeing them closed. Then, on the other hand, there is this phenomenon you've all pointed to of less successful or less desirable outcomes for people who are leaving their communities in order to train or work. And when there's a two-stage process, when people leave their communities to go somewhere to train, and then they go to a third place to work, where probably the outcome is even worse, especially for people leaving aboriginal communities where education levels, as we know, are unfortunately so often so much lower.

I'm wondering what existing programs, federal government or other government programs, you think could be retooled or reformed to address this kind of issue. We've discussed some of them today. We obviously need to get people the training they need at home, before they go to work. But they also need to feel at home more quickly where they're going to find the work, whether it's in the oil sands, in Nunavut, or in Yukon. Have you seen programs under Human Resources Development Canada or Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada or at a provincial level in your communities that could be scaled up and do that work on that front?

We heard about these mobile trucks, which not all of us have seen, and I assume that's a fairly small-scale operation so far. But are we missing something there? Is there a model that could be scaled up that would not cost us too much, that would be retooling an existing program and making it more effective for what is going to be a wave of demands in small, and even large, new communities where these developments are happening?

● (1720)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Buckway.

Ms. Bev Buckway: Thank you.

I would tackle that in an offshoot way. One of the issues we face, of course, is housing. So even if you have a community that you can take people from another community to provide the training, there is not always adequate housing. We're seeing that right across the north. We have people who want to bring skilled people up north for jobs, but there's no housing for them. The people come up for interviews but say goodbye because there's no housing. Away they go.

In a lot of senses, it ties into the training, because although there are programs people can do, if they take the training and want to go back, there's no housing. So there could be some different incentive programs for housing and trying to find more rental housing for people. People who are training generally want to rent; they don't want to own a $450,000 house when they're in training. That doesn't work.

So I would urge you to look at the housing situation, and not just social housing, but market rental housing for people who are starting out, who are wanting to work their way up, and who are getting into the businesses to succeed. That helps individuals and it also helps businesses.

I can tell you that in Whitehorse right now, for two of our businesses it's only through the immigrants coming in to work that those businesses are able to survive. The housing situation isn't always great for them either, but that's how we're making a success of it.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander, you have about 30 seconds, so I think—

Mr. Chris Alexander: Could I ask one quick question?

The Chair: If you have no windup to your question, if it's a short question, yes.

Mr. Chris Alexander: It will be really short.

All of you talked about diversification and value added—and here the Canadian Chamber mentioned that Thompson is doing it—and the use of clusters to help communities adjust to changing outlooks for their industries. Are there cases where we really have to say that, realistically, that's not a good strategy and that people should go to where the jobs are, to another community? How do we know when diversification is not working and that it is really time to...? Because some communities have gone down that route as well, whether we all like it or not.

The Chair: Who wishes to field that? Ms. Buckway?

Ms. Bev Buckway: Well, I can say that in the north we're seeing places along the highways where there once were thriving businesses that are now gone. So I think it's a matter of economics, where it becomes self-fulfilling and people are just leaving, which is not necessarily a good thing. I think it's part of the change in our culture and the way technology is coming in. People have to adapt to the changes, and sometimes they're not willing to make the changes that we maybe need to make. But as we work through the years, these things become inevitable. As mines close, people move out and go elsewhere. It's tough. It's very difficult.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cuzner, go ahead.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I'm going to blurt out four questions and then I'll just get out of the way, okay? We'll see how much time is left.

Ms. Sparks, I will ask you the first one. You mentioned that both the employers and the employees need job coaching through the process and supports for job coaching through the process. Could you elaborate on that and also on the role that unions might play in developing these opportunities in aboriginal communities?

Mr. Pineau, if I could, I'll throw two at you. We know through some of our trade agreements that any kinds of investments are sometimes seen as subsidies. I know that in the fishery when we invest in small craft harbours and when fishermen are receiving EI benefits, those are seen as subsidies now, and they're being challenged in some of our trade agreements. I want your sense as to whether or not we're bulletproof on training within your sector.

Last, could you make a comment on where we are with HR? I know that we have a number of forestry schools across the country. We have one in New Brunswick; UNB is there. What's the attendance like there? Are they fully subscribed? Could you comment on that?

We'll go to Ms. Sparks for her answers.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: On the coaching question, I think it relates importantly and directly to retention. A lot of initiatives and activities that take place are about getting people employed initially, and I think we have to look at the whole issue of how we keep them employed successfully once they're there. For me, it's about creating an environment at the workplace that will ensure the success of those individuals. I think the worst thing we could do is to get someone employed, have it as a bad fit, as an inappropriate situation, and have them leave. I think the importance of coaching relates to retention.

● (1725)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: It's a key component of it.

Ms. Rosemary Sparks: Yes, a key component.

With respect to unions and their role in this, I see them as a key partner at the table with employers and all the other groups at the local level, working out some solutions that will be appropriate to that particular area.

I think they have role in training as well. They do play a training role in our industry, and so I think there are opportunities there for them to be engaged in that. I know that some of our unions are doing that, in fact. We have some examples of operating engineers working with folks in Nunavut to ensure that there's some training taking place.

So I think they have a training role, but they also have a role in working out some local solutions with the employer, with governments, and with the aboriginal groups.

Mr. John Pineau: In terms of your first question, what I see a lot of the time are public-private partnerships in research and development, where industry is investing a lot of money at the same time and pooling the financial resources to figure out how to do things better, how to make new products, and how to become more competitive.

I think we are bulletproof myself, or we should be interpreted as such on the world stage.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: This is such a hypersensitive industry.

Mr. John Pineau: Well, the softwood lumber dispute, which is chronic and probably isn't truly over....

I think that we are very good that way. We're seeing industry invest in a lot of research and development. They can always do more—certainly more on the forestry side, anyway—and governments are investing. I see federal and provincial governments and academia cooperating with industry as well. Again, FPInnovations, the Canadian Wood Fibre Centre, and Natural Resources Canada are all working together with industry and different universities to be more competitive, to come up with new products, and to make forestry work again.

With respect to your other question, that's a tougher one to answer. I think in some schools, some universities, and some colleges, they are oversubscribed. There's great interest in forestry still.

Often if the school changes the name of the program from forestry to say forest ecology, or natural resources management, or environmental science, it seems to get more kids into that stream.

That being said, traditional forestry, which has changed a lot, is interdisciplinary now. I think it's starting to see a resurgence at the community college level. Certainly in the technical programs, I'm seeing really good numbers there.

I think the universities are doing well. Certainly UBC is doing well. I think Lakehead is starting to turn around. I'm not as familiar with UNB. I'm on their advisory board, but I haven't seen any statistics lately. I think they're coming back too. So we're starting to see a little bit more interest there.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: On the naming of forestry programs, I come from a coal-mining community, and our coal miners became fossil fuel extraction technicians.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Pineau: It helps.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: It's a little more sexy now...around the girls.

The Chair: I guess that comment brings us to a conclusion. I'd like to thank all of the witnesses for taking the time to present to us. I would ask and remind you to file your briefing notes with us, if you could.

Again, thank you very much and safe travels.

The meeting is adjourned.

MAIL POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid / Port payé

Lettermail / Poste–lettre

1782711
Ottawa

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca