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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 27, 2012**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki**



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

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•(0845)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** We have a number of presenters in the first hour this morning. It's going to be a bit difficult to get through. We'll have each of the presenters make their statements, and then we'll have rounds of questions from each party.

We have Kelly Lendsay, from the Aboriginal Human Resource Council. We have Jennifer Steeves, the president of the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council. We have representatives from Electricity Human Resources Canada and the Canadian Electricity Association.

I understand we have Ave appearing by video conference from Toronto. Could you introduce yourself?

**Ms. Ave Lethbridge (Vice-President, Organizational Effectiveness and Environment, Health & Safety Division, Toronto Hydro, Canadian Electricity Association):** Hi. I'm Ave Lethbridge, from Toronto Hydro.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Then we'll start. Who is the first presenter?

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay (President and Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Human Resource Council):** Should we let ladies go first?

**The Chair:** Okay.

Jennifer, do you wish to present? Then we'll go from there.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves (President, Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, co-chairs, and members.

I'm very pleased to have been invited to appear here today in relation to your study on economic opportunities for young apprentices. I will provide you with some context on the automotive repair and service industry.

"Performance Driven", the 2009 labour market research report commissioned by CARS Council, included information regarding apprentices in the repair and service industry. Although the study is now a bit dated, I will provide you with some highlights that are relevant to your research initiative.

Regarding recruitment and retention of apprentices, 62% of employers had up to four apprentices and 31% of employers did not

currently employ any apprentices. Of the firms who employ apprentices, 58% experienced revenue growth in 2008, and of those who do not employ apprentices, only 49% saw revenue growth that year.

At the time of the study, only 30% of firms who employed apprentices reported using government programs and tax incentives related to apprenticeship, and 9% did not know such incentives existed.

According to discussion group participants, firms that did not recognize the contribution that apprentices make, or that found them insufficiently job ready, were those who chose not to employ them.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum conducted some very useful research about the return on investment for skilled trades employers, and determined a benefit-cost ratio of \$1.69 for automotive service technicians. The CARS Council has promoted this to industry employers in addition to the communication efforts of CAF.

On opportunities for apprentices, over 66,000 repair and service establishments employ an estimated 306,000 employees. The proportion of businesses earning \$1 million or more in annual revenue jumped from 23% in 2005 to 33% in 2009. The cost of diagnostic equipment and the supply of qualified new hires are the barriers to growth and profitability most often cited as having an extreme effect. Nearly all sector employees work full time, an average of 42 hours per week.

The success of apprentices being able to complete their training and integrate to the workforce is impacted by their expectations of the job, the skills in demand, and their ability to continually upgrade their skills in response to new technologies.

Here are some points to consider:

One, current labour market data is needed so that young people are geared towards appropriate local opportunities. Note that the last labour market study for the automotive repair and service industry was conducted in 2009. Given the economic environment of the past few years, it is recommended that new data be collected for informed decision-making. Due to HRSDC's decision to eliminate infrastructure funding for sector councils, the CARS Council will not be in a position to undertake this work in the future on behalf of the repair and service industry.

Two, a thorough awareness and understanding of the current demands of industry occupations, new technologies, and the skills impact is needed. This information should be researched and updated at regular intervals and shared with the education and training system.

Three, up-to-date labour market data and technology information needs to be connected to the education system. This connection does not always happen automatically even if the information is available.

Four, employers and educators need to connect more at the local level. Educators often need assistance in showing more relevance to what is being taught in the classroom. Employers have the ability to show how learning is applied in a workplace setting, but the challenge is that they do not have time to do this. However, connecting educators to employers can help build more relevance to the students' learning. Teachers are the experts at this and sometimes just need the opportunity. Students who see how their learning is applied can become more engaged and be better prepared when entering an apprenticeship.

Five, parents are a tough audience but are also the biggest influencer. The more messaging to this audience about the value of skilled trades people, the better.

Six, continued emphasis on the importance of essential skills as the foundation of all future learning is needed. There is an excellent example of how a post-secondary training program has integrated essential skills assessment and development to their motive power program and has raised awareness among employers in the community. Students are assessed and are provided opportunities to improve essential skills. Local employers request evidence of the students' essential skills when providing placements. This pull by employers provides incentive for the students to take more care to develop their essential skills, which prepares them better for lifelong learning once employed.

• (0850)

Seven, the Working in Canada website would be a natural fit for industry-related labour market data, skills requirements, links to skills assessments, and employers seeking apprentices. There are also good sites, such as [www.apprenticesearch.com](http://www.apprenticesearch.com), that may be a consideration when further developing the WIC.

A national approach in leadership is worthwhile when examining economic opportunities for apprentices in undertaking approaches to connect young people to the skilled trades and those employers. Coordination of the above-mentioned items nationally is a worthwhile endeavour to support apprentices going forward.

I hope this information is helpful to your study. I will be pleased to answer questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Jennifer. That was within time and we appreciate that very much.

I think we'll hear from Kelly Lendsay next. Then we'll move to Electricity Human Resources Canada.

Please go ahead, Kelly.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm not going to give you a single statistic because you're going to hear a lot of statistics from all the speakers throughout this meeting.

I have to tell you, though, that a few years back, Ed, you were one of our speakers at Inclusion Works, our national recruitment fair where aboriginal grads from across Canada attend a live recruitment fair with employers. I always remember some of the youth coming up to me and saying, "You know, these members of Parliament, they're really human. They really seem to care." You can be assured, ladies and gentlemen, I do tell them that here at the House of Commons, you are very human.

Let me start with my conclusion. Aboriginal people have always had a proud tradition of work. If you look in the trades, from the iron workers through all the skilled trades, aboriginal people have always worked as apprentices and continue to fill a very important void.

I was in Australia a few years back. When you think about the attitudes toward trades, they have the University of Queensland and they also have the Queensland University of Technology. People do encourage their children to go to university to get professional degrees as well as to get degrees and certificates in the trades.

I was a member of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum for 10 years. One of the best things we did at that time was an advertising campaign in cinemas and theatres. There were three messages, one pitched to parents, one pitched to youth, and one pitched to employers. It was marketing. It was about how to change parents' attitudes toward the trades. It showcased youth choosing apprenticeships, choosing trades as a career, and how to encourage employers to invest in apprenticeships.

When you think about skills on a national level, is it a provincial area or a national area? If we were in Alberta today, the people in Alberta, especially in the oil sands, care as much about the skills in Newfoundland as they do in Alberta. Why is that? There's a direct flight every day from St. John's, Newfoundland to the oil sands and on those flights are skilled workers. This is a national issue and it needs national leadership.

Our work is with employers. I want to talk, not about apprenticeship youth but about the employers. I'll tell you a story about a friend of mine, Joe Bova. Joe Bova and I sit on CORCAN's national advisory committee. Joe is one of those employers you'll never read about in the *Globe and Mail*. He runs a construction company. He's a very successful guy. Four years ago he was desperate for bricklayers and construction workers. He always was reluctant to get involved in bringing skilled workers from abroad, but he got involved in Manitoba and he went to Germany and brought back 13 families at a cost of \$20,000 a piece.

For the record, I'm pro-immigration. Even though I work and advocate for aboriginal people and employers, we do need immigrants because we're in a net negative growth market in this country and we need to be a country that is seen as an employer of choice for immigrants.

Joe gets back and he tells me that somewhere along the line there's a disconnect. He said that he lives in a city, Winnipeg, that has a high native population and a high youth unemployment rate. He lives in a province where some of these reserves match third world conditions. Part of the problem is youth who have a sense of entitlement and a poor work ethic. In part, it's the federal government because they transfer responsibility to the provinces and when disasters have occurred, they have never looked back. The third, in part, is that our own employers and labour unions have relied too much on government and we're not doing a good enough job raising our own labour force.

Joe was approached by a native elder, a friend of his, who told him a young man had gotten his daughter pregnant and the young man needed a job. He asked Joe if he would give the young man a job. The young guy's name was Mike. Mike showed up at the job site, all 110 pounds of him, and Joe said he was going to give this kid a chance but he didn't think he would make it to the end of the day. Well, he did make it to the end of the day and six months later, Mike, the 110-pound kid, was still working, and now he wanted to get an apprenticeship. So Joe phoned up the labour union and they said, "Sorry, there's no space here for training". He phoned up Red River College and was told, "Sorry, there's no space here".

Joe was so frustrated that he couldn't find a spot for Mike to get his apprenticeship schooling that he finally phoned some cabinet ministers and the Department of Labour and they finally found Mike a spot in Thompson, Manitoba.

Joe's frustration is one which I think many employers feel. What Joe was expressing was that in his own backyard there are 100,000 Mikes. Well, ladies and gentlemen, what I think we need is 100,000 Joe Bovas. We need 100,000 employers who see aboriginal people as a workforce solution and are prepared to invest. We need public sector investing. We need private sector investing.

• (0855)

That's the work that I see ahead of us. We have opportunities to take the fastest growing labour force in this country... They do see apprenticeships as a career opportunity. They can be a solution to many of the skills shortages we have, but it's going to take the cooperation of governments, the private sector, and aboriginal people to make it happen.

Joe Bova and I serve on CORCAN. You talk about putting people to work; we have another group of people we have to put to work. They're the offenders. Each year, between 7,000 and 9,000 of them are released. They need a second chance. We need employers who are going to step up for that. There are 20% of these people who are aboriginal, so we need employers who are going to step up. We need to take every untapped labour market pool and put the people to work.

Speaking of work, I can only stay with you until 9:30; I have meetings at 10. We're headquartered in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, but I'm in our nation's capital at least once or twice a month. I'm pleased to be here.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that, Kelly. We certainly will open up the rounds of questioning before you go.

Now we'll hear from Electricity Human Resources Canada. Michelle, go ahead.

**Ms. Michelle Branigan (Executive Director, Electricity Human Resources Canada):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman, honourable members, and ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in relation to your study on economic opportunities for young apprentices.

I'm the executive director of Electricity Human Resources Canada, which was formerly the Electricity Sector Council. I met some of you around the table when we were called that.

Our mission is to strengthen the ability of the Canadian electricity industry to meet the current and future needs for a highly skilled, safety-focused, diverse, and productive workforce. We are the authoritative voice for human resources in the electricity sector.

I have with me today, our board chair and COO of Hydro Ottawa, Norm Fraser; as well as board of directors member, John Ives, staff officer at the Power Workers' Union. They can share their first-hand experiences with apprentices in the electricity industry.

To provide some very brief context for the Canadian electricity industry, our industry right now employs over 108,000 people. Most of them are highly skilled workers. Like other industrial sectors, we're facing the immediate challenge of an imminent departure of those skilled workers, as people take retirement. We also need to replace aging infrastructure. We're facing a double jeopardy, if you will.

• (0900)

**Mr. Norm Fraser (Chair of the Board of Directors, Chief Operating Officer, Distribution and Customer Service, Hydro Ottawa, Electricity Human Resources Canada):** Thank you, Michelle.

Our most recent labour market information study has concluded that our electricity sector will have to recruit almost 45,000 new workers, which is about half of the current workforce, by 2016. That's just over three years from now. We do not want to contemplate the impact of not having enough qualified staff to manage this essential industry. It's a destiny issue for us. The trades play a critical role in the makeup of the electricity workforce. Combined with engineering staff, these two groups represent almost half of the workforce.

Those of us in the sector understand the importance of increasing the appeal of apprenticeship programs to our Canadian youth. Our industry has a strong history of supporting licensing and certifications and building pathways for apprentices. We believe it is absolutely necessary to improve the transition from post-secondary training to the workplace.

As an employer, I have already seen how partnering with local education institutions to develop apprenticeship programs can be successful and how necessary it is for employers to be innovative in order to ensure workforce sustainability. In 2005, Hydro Ottawa looked around the province and saw very few new trained trades workers in the workforce. They were simply not there, so we invented our own apprenticeship program in-house. We started training, recognizing that it takes four years to train a qualified line maintainer, for example, and probably two years beyond that to be fully qualified. We had to start training well in advance of the wave of retirements. That was a very successful program, and it's now in its eighth year.

I talked about institutions. Recently we've gone into a partnership with Algonquin College. They have created a lines program, a hugely successful one. They've had to double their enrolment in the last year, just after the first year of training. We participate in the field training with Algonquin professors, which has been a very successful win-win circumstance for both the utility and the institution.

While we also recognize that registrations for apprenticeships are going up in some occupations, which is great news—they often do when we see the economy fluctuating—we still battle the perception that the trades do not offer a viable and well-respected career choice. Hopefully, that will change in the future.

I'll turn it over to John.

**Mr. John Ives (Member, Board of Directors, Electricity Human Resources Canada):** Thank you.

In our industry, we find that women are extremely under-represented. They average about 25% of our workforce, but only about 5% of those are in trades occupations. Understanding and addressing the barriers to entering and staying in the industry is going to be a key focus for us in the future, especially as it relates to women in the workplace. We're hoping to address those challenges over the coming years.

A couple of the things we've done through the Power Workers' Union, which I also represent, along with Electricity Human Resources Canada, is our TradeUp program. We actually enter schools and talk to students, specifically young women, about entering the trades. We have found that the most successful way of doing this is by getting women already in the trades to talk to these young women and to recruit them.

We still run into the same problems as other sectors. Completions are lagging. Apprentices are not qualifying. Sometimes they take up to eight to 10 years to complete their apprenticeships because of a lack of work and a lack of training.

New technology, changing market conditions, and career preferences have altered the path apprentices follow from registration to certification. There's a growing need for specialization that meets the needs of employers. Employers, we're finding, are generally trying to pigeonhole people into very specific jobs related to the trades, and apprentices are leaving prior to finishing their apprenticeships. These specializations are one reason for lower completion rates for our apprentices. They choose to end or delay the process once they have secured regular full-time work.

We also need to make a much more concentrated effort, everyone from employers to labour, educators, and government, not only to streamline the mobility issue for apprentices but to address other issues. With respect to the mobility issue for apprentices, once an apprentice is actually engaged in an apprenticeship, moving from employer to employer or province to province is very difficult. We do a fine job on the Red Seal program for the certified journeyperson, but it is not there for apprentices moving from province to province.

● (0905)

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** Mr. Chair, in completion, thank you for the invitation today. We look forward to questions.

I will leave with the clerk a copy of the TradeUp referenced in John's part of the presentation. We've done something similar in B.C. for the youth and all the high school students out there. I'll leave that for you to have a look at later on.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. We appreciate the presentation.

We'll conclude with the Canadian Electricity Association.

Mr. Burpee, you'll be presenting. I'm not sure if you'll share your time. I'll leave that up to you.

**Mr. Jim R. Burpee (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Electricity Association):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Ave Lethbridge.

My name is Jim Burpee. I'm the president and CEO of the Canadian Electricity Association, CEA. We are the national voice of electricity in Canada and have been since 1891.

Across the country, our members provide electricity generation, transmission, and distribution services to industrial, commercial, residential, and institutional clients. We represent all industry stakeholders, including utility companies, large and small, energy traders, and representatives from the full electricity value chain including suppliers of equipment, technology, and services.

Your current study on young apprentices, and much of your recent work on labour shortages, is of great interest to our membership. The decisions and recommendations you make are important and will have impacts on our industry.

As is the case with most major employers in Canada today, and as you have no doubt heard repeatedly, the electricity sector is facing a shortage of skilled workers as a result of the imminent wave of baby boomer retirements, but what makes our industry unique, and our human resource challenges particularly acute, are additional labour market pressures that will require even more workers with many new and varied skill sets.

Most of Canada's electrical power grid was built over 25 years ago to serve a population of 20 million. Today, that population exceeds 34 million, people whose lifestyles are increasingly dependent on electrical devices.

As an industry, we are embarking on ambitious new projects, transformative projects, to bring electricity infrastructure in line with the needs of the 21st century.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, investment in the renewal of Canada's electricity infrastructure will result in an average of 156,000 jobs each year over the next 20 years. To put that into context, the 108,000 that Michelle and Norm mentioned, those are regular employees of the utilities. The 156,000 are in the construction trades, engineering, and all the support to do the capital investment. That's the capital program as well as the ongoing, whereas the 108,000 represents the ongoing operations and maintenance.

We're talking about construction jobs to build generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure, jobs in management and finance, in applied science and engineering, and in sales and transportation. We're talking about jobs in every province and territory in the country.

The labour requirements to accommodate this investment in electricity infrastructure will exert additional pressure on an already tight labour market.

In addition to the infrastructure challenge, the electricity grid as envisioned by Edison is being turned on its head by the development of new smart grid technologies. Across the country and around the world, innovative people are coming up with great ideas.

Development of technologies relating to electric vehicle integration, electricity storage, renewable forms of generation, to name just a few, are characterized by their information-based applications that will require employee skill sets very different from those required to operate the electricity system most of us have known in our lifetimes.

This is a terrific time to be involved in the electricity sector, but we will need to train, recruit, and retain the highly skilled workers to turn the smart grid vision into reality.

I'll now pass it over to Ave Lethbridge.

• (0910)

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Lethbridge.

**Ms. Ave Lethbridge:** Thank you, Jim.

Good morning, committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today from Toronto.

My name is Ave Lethbridge. I'm the vice-president of human resources and environment, health and safety, at Toronto Hydro.

Toronto Hydro operates an electricity distribution system that delivers electricity to almost one million customers in the city of Toronto. We are one of the largest municipal electricity distribution companies in Canada and distribute approximately 18% of the electricity consumed in Ontario. We own and operate an asset worth \$2.4 billion.

We have an opportunity today to discuss our apprentices and trade positions. At Toronto Hydro we have approximately 1,600 employees. These are comprised of skilled trades, engineers, and management professionals in general.

Our vision is to continuously maximize customer and stakeholder satisfaction by providing safe and reliable services in an environmentally responsible way.

The challenges faced by Canada's electricity sector today and in the future, as outlined by Jim, reflect many of the challenges we're facing at Toronto Hydro. In terms of infrastructure renewal, 2011 marked not only our 100th anniversary in service but the completion of the largest annual capital construction program in our history.

On the technology front, we are actively engaged in many of the emerging technologies that Jim mentioned, including the integration into the grid of strategies for electric vehicles and renewables such as solar.

I chair the Canadian Electricity Association human resources committee, a group of very senior human resource leaders across Canada and our CEA member community and companies. Our vision is to shape the future of our companies through innovative people strategies. Ensuring that governments are aware of our current and future HR requirements, both in our industry and our organizations is part of our mandate and is why we're eager to participate in your current study.

At Toronto Hydro over the next 10 years approximately 750 of our employees will be eligible for retirement. That's more than 40% of our current workforce. Many of our employees approaching retirement are highly skilled tradespeople who've acquired extensive knowledge about the complexities of our aging distribution system, including our very complex underground network. It takes almost five years as an apprentice to build the specialized skill sets necessary to perform the work on our distribution grid. As an organization, preparing for this transition requires an increased focus on and investment in recruitment selection and skills training programs and initiatives.

I'd like to highlight some of the initiatives we're undertaking as a company to increase awareness about careers in our industry and company, particularly for young people.

Faced with the challenge of renewing an aging workforce, Toronto Hydro has developed an outreach strategy to ensure we attract and retain top talent. In 2011 alone we participated in seven college and university career fairs and events. Overall we have hired and trained over 200 new trades employees and helped them successfully complete their four-year apprenticeship.

In terms of ensuring we have qualified workers to operate the distribution system of the future, we are collaborating with universities to develop innovative and technologically advanced solutions to modernize our distribution system.

We are also working with Georgian College's School of Engineering Technology to help shape the curriculum for the electrical engineering technician and technology programs. Toronto Hydro will invest over \$750,000 with Georgian College over the next five years.

In 2011, in addition to our partnership with Georgian College, we collaborated with Ryerson University's Centre for Urban Energy, the University of Toronto, Humber College, Mohawk College, and York University.

An initiative that we are particularly proud of is the municipal utility trades apprenticeship program that is recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. We are one of three qualified trade schools in the province. We provide our graduates with trade-specific apprenticeship programs for power line technicians, certified power cable persons, a distribution systems technologist, leader technicians, and power systems controllers. This helps to ensure that the apprentices graduate with the necessary proficiencies to fulfill these positions at our utility.

• (0915)

Each program also includes a cooperative education component where students who work at Toronto Hydro gain practical experience working alongside our staff.

In 2011, Toronto Hydro hired 43 apprentices—12 certified power line persons, 13 certified power cable persons, 12 distribution systems technologists, and 6 power systems controllers.

In 2011, Toronto Hydro had almost 300 co-op placements to support the development of skilled professionals for the energy industry. Over half of those co-ops were from the engineering technician-technologist diploma program.

Our selection process and commitment to—

**The Chair:** Ms. Lethbridge, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'll need you to bring this to a close. If you have some material remaining, we will try to get it in through questioning. If you could try to wrap up, that would be great.

**Ms. Ave Lethbridge:** Sure, I am about 30 seconds away.

While Toronto Hydro has demonstrated that there is much to do to address human resources challenges, there remains a need for support from the federal government. More specifically, steps need to be taken to ensure the adequate supply of candidates for our post-secondary institutions and programs. CEA members call on the federal government to take a greater role in raising awareness for career opportunities in the skilled trades.

A recent report on skilled trades notes that 68% of youth ages 13 to 18 said they would be unlikely to consider a career in skilled trades. Some 72% of the youth said their parents had not encouraged them to pursue a career in skilled trades, and 86% indicated that their guidance counsellors had not recommended skilled-trades options.

Mr. Chair, there's still work to be done.

Thank you for your invitation to appear today and for the opportunity to outline some of the challenges faced by the Canadian electricity sector.

I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that presentation.

We will start the first round of questioning with Madam Boutin-Sweet.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. My questions are for Mr. Lendsay.

In traditional aboriginal cultures, young people used to learn a great deal by observing their elders. I imagine that apprenticeship programs must be appropriate for aboriginal cultures. I expect that this would help them to develop competence in the trades, particularly.

I would like to know whether the programs are adapted to aboriginal culture and reality. If not, how could the federal government adapt certain programs to young aboriginals so as to ensure their success?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** I think there are many cultures where apprenticeship has been a proven way to learn, from the time that it meant learning to hunt and live off the land. Years ago in Alberta, we put more than 400 aboriginal people to work in a program funded by the provincial and federal governments. It was the Alberta apprenticeship program. It is no longer in existence. I remember there was a video done by an elder whose name was Gilbert.

Gilbert told a story about becoming an elder and how it took 15 years. He told of his journey, but he related the story to being an apprentice. I remember making a deal with the Alberta folks. They said they'd take some federal money to produce this video, but that it had to be shared across Canada. You don't need 50 videos. This demonstrates how we can take a project the federal government can support and share it across the country.

Next year, our organization, our social enterprise, will be 15 years old. We keep repeating the same projects across this country and calling them something different. We don't really do good knowledge transfer. We have interprovincial problems with labour. We can't even move wine, let alone people, across our borders.



• (0920)

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** We can now.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** Can we now?

**An hon. member:** They finally dealt with that one.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** I am going to send an email to Chief Clarence Louie at Osoyoos. He will be so very pleased, because he wants Nk'Mip wine to go across the country.

There needs to be a coordinated approach to investment. The reason I'm leaving early is that I'm meeting with the Minister of Finance's office, HRSDC's office, and people at AANDC. It is about creating more social financing mechanisms. How can you take a dollar of federal money and leverage it with at least another dollar or \$1.50 from the private sector?

There has to be more money. It can't only come from government. There have to be leveraged social financing mechanisms. Some call them social impact bonds. I've been meeting with folks in Australia, England, and elsewhere. We have been doing social enterprise for seven years. We now generate more than \$1 million of our own private revenue. For every dollar of federal money I've taken, I've generated \$1.38. We think that's the way forward.

You heard the lady say that they invested \$750,000 in the colleges—Georgian, Ryerson, Mohawk. The investment needs to go into places, as Joe said, such as colleges. For aboriginal people in the college system, the gaps have decreased. We're seeing aboriginal people entering the colleges—not the universities, but colleges—almost at the same rate as their fellow Canadians. This is good news.

There are many other problems about apprenticeship and completion rates that we all know about, and those are important. There is another thing I'd recommend to the federal government.

I'm in good company here. My father was a linesman. There's a difference between my dad and our family and my cousins. I've had cousins who have been unemployed, cousins who have been in jail, uncles who were incarcerated, and I've seen proud families whose members have provided for their families. My dad was an electrician. He died much too young, but now two Métis guys—one is 29 and one is 40—have become electricians with SaskPower.

The federal government needs to realize that when people want role model and mentorship programs—these mechanisms that actually help—they will create jobs in the long run, but it's hard to draw a straight line. I think we've become too focused on showing the final output, which is the job.

Aboriginal people have said you need to be able to talk to people. You need to be able to apprentice them. You need to coach them. You need to educate them. You need to discipline them. You learn these skills. I think there are some very good examples of aboriginal cultures.

Thinking about the cultural aspect, in 2006 or 2007 I was up in Nunavut and I met Nestor. He's the first Inuk to work for Nunavut Power. Seven started the program, and one made it through. We cannot afford these types of completion rates anymore.

My appeal would be for alignment of investments. How are we going to leverage more private sector investment? How are we going to coordinate our investments, not just provincially but across this country with some national strategies?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lendsay. It's always good to hear from you. You always have stories to back up your point, and that's good.

But Madame Boutin-Sweet, your time is used up.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** I'm just like the Ukrainians, full of stories.

**The Chair:** Very good.

We'll move to Mr. Butt.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone, and thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here with us.

This is an important study, because this is ensuring that we have a system, across the country, we hope, that will encourage more people to consider apprenticeship and that will encourage more employers to participate and to hire through an apprenticeship system.

I'm glad Mr. Lendsay talked about the age difference. I hope that some people will see apprenticeship as a second career opportunity. They may be in their 40s, and whatever they thought they were going to do at age 20 isn't the same as at age 40. This is an opportunity for them to retrain and get back into the workforce. That's how I see the apprenticeship program.

Yes, I think we have a challenge getting younger people to consider apprenticeships, to consider the trades. You've all talked about changing parents' mindsets. I'm the father of daughters who are 13 and 9 years old. We're going to have to have the conversation eventually about what their career path will be. A couple of people have talked about how we can get more young women looking at the skilled trades. I think that's a challenge we have as well.

I want to start by asking about the challenge regarding employers and whether any of you have specific ideas of things we could be doing to get more employers on board to participate in apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship is employment. I think in most apprenticeships—you can correct me, if I'm wrong—the employer pays a salary while the person goes through the apprenticeship program. They are hiring somebody to participate in this program.

What can we do to encourage more employers to participate? We know that 80% of the people in this country work for small business. What do we do? Do you have any specific suggestions for us, things we can look at as a federal government by way of providing incentives or looking at ways to encourage more companies to hire apprentices?

Mr. Chairman, whoever wants to jump in can respond to this. It's probably the only question I'll get in, so I'll leave it at that.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Okay. Let's see who wants to respond to it.

Is there anyone in particular?

Mr. Burpee, go ahead.

**Mr. Jim R. Burpee:** I can't speak on behalf of small employers, because we tend to be all large companies.

All of them become involved, because they all have structured risk management processes. Every year they evaluate their upcoming risks. Labour shortage is always high on that list. They understand the role of training and development of staff. That's why you have the experiences of both Hydro Ottawa and Toronto Hydro linking up with community colleges to provide it.

I'm sorry I can't answer for small business. I can answer for the 20%, not for the 80%, sorry.

**The Chair:** Ms. Steeves, go ahead. We'll come back to Mr. Fraser.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** Most of our industry is small businesses. Their reality is that they don't have an HR department and they don't think about shortages until they need to hire somebody. A big challenge is that they still look at hiring an apprentice as a cost rather than look at the investment in building their labour supply. They're more apt to pay a guy down the street a little bit more to come to work for them rather than hire the apprentice.

There's a lot around awareness that the labour supply is tight. Small employers don't always realize until they go out to hire that the supply is very tight. Concerning awareness that this is an investment that is going to pay off for them, I mentioned that CAF has done really good work. We've tried to get that knowledge out to employers as well.

As well, concerning the job readiness of apprentices, anything that can be done to enhance an apprentice's appreciation of workplace expectations would help. There's the disconnect between employers and the education training system. Employers generally want to train. They're set up to realize that this is a role for them, but they really need the apprentice to come in on time, have a good attitude, and have communication skills, because that apprentice is going to be in front of the client or the customer at some point. There too we see the importance of the essential skills piece.

**The Chair:** We will conclude with Mr. Fraser.

**Mr. Norm Fraser:** It is pretty much upon the same theme that I want to elaborate.

One thing we need to do is recognize that most of the apprentice programs that have been developed are homegrown. Individual utilities or companies saw a need and went out and acted on it. We still face the barrier that we have to get into the schools and convince the kids that these are actually very good jobs. They require highly skilled people, people who can have a job for life, essentially. Employers are still looking at this as a seller's market for labour.

We need to get into the schools early and nationally to convince our kids that these are good jobs.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Would you give a very short intervention, Mr. Lendsay.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** I promise, Ed.

I have three things I would offer Mr. Butt.

First of all, I don't think everybody is an expert at training. We should do a better job of supporting those employers who say they would like to do training. It would be very good.

We should look at tax incentives. Maybe there is a top amount of 125% of training investment deducted in terms of your payroll taxes. Something around tax incentives would definitely encourage those employers who are good at training. Then they wouldn't mind if their employees are raided and they lose them because there has been some cost recovery.

There could be shared training pools. Small employers could contribute to training pools that could be supported by federal or provincial dollars.

Another suggestion is to look to what Quebec does. I don't know the exact numbers, but I think Quebec collects something like a 1% after tax of net profit. It goes into a training fund. You either spend it or lose it. You should check the facts on that. This country is going to have to create their training funds like Quebec has done.

• (0930)

**The Chair:** Okay, thank you for that intervention.

Mr. Cleary, go ahead.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am the MP for St. John's South—Mount Pearl in Newfoundland and Labrador, so my question has to do with the megaproject of Muskrat Falls.

Ms. Branigan, you mentioned how the electricity industry employs 108,000 highly skilled workers and that we need to recruit another 45,000 new workers by 2016. That's a lot of people. We have aging infrastructure.

Mr. Burpee, you talk about expectations of 156,000 construction trades jobs each year for the next 20 years. At the same time we have baby boomer retirements. In Labrador we have a project that is worth more than \$7 billion. We have direct and indirect employment of 18,400 person-years in Newfoundland and Labrador. Across Canada, on the person-years of employment, the expectations are over 47,000 person-years. The peak employment during the construction phase in 2013 is 2,700 jobs.

To get right to the point, we have a megaproject in Labrador at Muskrat Falls. We also have the construction of the power line across the Cabot Strait, from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia. Do we have the workforce to build the project and to keep it running? Do you see any red flags?

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** I have actually spoken to some of the people in Nova Scotia lately. They don't have a difficulty so much with attracting people into the company, for example, to work. I spoke to the CEO there. His frustration lay in the fact that he had people who he had brought in, and he was training them for three, four, or five years. Now he is actually losing them to Alberta, even though he had put that amount of time into actually training them. They are basically going where the money is because of the high salaries that are out there. That was his immediate concern.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but do you think there would be a concern about salary competition between places like Alberta and Newfoundland?

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** That's the anecdotal evidence that we're hearing. Companies are actually losing people because of that. It goes back to the point that Kelly made, where on that plane that goes out every day, there is a ton of people from out east. I've been on that plane twice, as well, in the last couple of weeks.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** I'm on that plane twice a week and it is filled with people on shift work going back and forth to Alberta.

What do we do about that? How does a fairly new employer during construction and once the project is running compete with employers in Alberta who have been around for a dog's age and are paying better wages? How do you do that?

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** We discussed this a little bit this morning. It comes down to demonstrating the value added. There are individuals who don't want to uproot families, for example, or spend six months away from their family because they are consistently having to go out to Alberta. It's ensuring that there is a good salary. But it's not all about salary. It's about culture of work, too. It's understanding that these are long-term jobs and not just something that is going to be a one- or two-year construction fit while that manufacturing and development is taking place.

**The Chair:** I think Mr. Burpee wishes to have a response as well.

**Mr. Jim R. Burpee:** Within the 156,000 total jobs, which is not just construction but supporting the engineering and the supply chain, your 2,700 jobs you referenced would be in that. That project was included in the estimate when the Conference Board of Canada did it.

In the construction industry, a lot of that work in the transmission lines will be done by experienced contractors who work across the country and draw on a pool of resources from across the country.

There are issues from time to time. Even within the oil sands, you could see four or five years ago when too many projects were going above what the infrastructure could support. They got into competition with each other, and labour prices went up and they were making promises, whether it was bonuses or overtime, or what not.

The construction industry tries to manage it the best they can, but if the total demand is all up at the same time, the law of supply and demand, when it comes to construction, comes into play.

● (0935)

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** Mr. Lendsay, I have a quick question for you. I guess a key for this project in Labrador is to tap into the aboriginal workforce.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** Yes. Going to the women's position that was put forward, there are leaders such as Michèle Audette, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada. There have been aboriginal women in construction in these programs. I think we need to look to that.

I'll tell you what I think the reality is, not just for Muskrat Falls, but for projects across this country. I remember being up in Fort McMurray and going to Earls restaurant. It closed at 9 p.m. because

they couldn't get enough labour. There will be slowdowns in this country. It's a productivity issue. Projects will simply be delayed or not get started or they will stop and start because of labour. I think that reality is kind of scary for people. I'd offer that to you.

I'd love to make some connections to people such as the Native Women's Association of Canada. That's her own territory. She is from there.

How do we align those communities with those job prospects you're talking about?

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

Mr. Cleary, I know you have a whole slew of questions you would like to ask, but the time has run out.

We'll move to Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, witnesses, for being here.

The major issue seems to be about persuading some of these young people to get into apprenticeship programs. What else can we do to help? What can the federal government do to help motivate some of these people into considering these jobs?

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** In some instances, I don't think it's necessarily that they don't want to go into those jobs. I think you have to take a step back. They are not even aware of the types of careers that are out there. I know that as a young girl, I would never have dreamt that there were so many different types of apprenticeships in the electricity industry or in other industries. I think we need to take that step back.

We know that the parents are prime influencers. We know that the teachers are prime influencers, but a lot of the teachers themselves are not aware of the number of in-depth jobs available. We need to do a better job of educating the teachers so that they can talk to students and make them understand about the different types of jobs that are accessible to them.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** I'll answer, and then I'm going to depart, Mr. Daniel.

First, in the school system, I see math for people in the trades. In some provinces, they have created a math curriculum. Unfortunately, some might perceive it as second-best math, but actually, it isn't. It's really math for the trades so that when you go into trade school, you're better prepared. I think those types of structural things are important.

Mr. Butt, you have two children, ages nine and thirteen.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** I have daughters who are thirteen and nine.

**Mr. Kelly Lendsay:** What every parent needs to do is ask their kids what trade they would like and what university degree they would like. If everybody started having aspirations to have a trade and a university degree, all of a sudden you would see change.

I have to bid you adieu. Thank you very much, folks.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lendsay, for appearing.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Are there any other comments?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** I think there's a leadership role that can be taken. To Kelly's point about labour issues slowing productivity or there being challenges around that, I think we're experiencing that. I think there's a leadership role that needs to be taken to connect industry with the education training system. We can't assume that just having more information will help, because they won't know to reach for it. Teachers and educators don't know how to use it, but they are really excited when they see how those connections can be made.

A lot of them are trying to show the relevance of what they're teaching. They are trying to show the applicability. Students don't understand how they're going to use it. But by making those connections with the workplace, which introduces them to the value of various occupations, not just trades but all occupations, all of a sudden there's a better conversation happening. People are better able to make informed decisions when choosing careers.

**Mr. John Ives:** In my experience, when we're talking about people applying for apprenticeship jobs, it's not necessarily that there aren't applicants. A lot of the time there aren't the jobs. The negative that comes back from the young people who want to get into apprenticeships and can't find work is where I think there is the biggest disconnect.

I think Mr. Butt hit the nail on the head when he asked how we get the employers to hire more apprentices.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Is that true even though you're expecting to have another 45,000 people by 2016?

• (0940)

**Mr. John Ives:** Yes. People aren't being hired at those rates.

We just did a round of hiring for power line apprentices at Hydro One, which the union was involved in. We had 2,700 applicants for 64 positions. It's a regular occurrence to get those kinds of applications. There just aren't enough entry-level jobs for those 2,700 people to get into the trades.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** I'm getting confused. You have a requirement for 45,000 new employees, yet you don't have them now is what you're saying.

**Mr. John Ives:** Yes. How do you train them?

**Ms. Michelle Branigan:** There's a long lead time with apprenticeships for the electricity industry specifically.

We're lucky in some regards insofar as the electricity industry has recognized this over the last 10 years. We went through a period in the late 1980s and 1990s where we stopped hiring apprentices altogether, and that has created huge difficulties. The industry has been working actively to address that over the last decade, as some of the examples that have been given illustrate, and that has resulted, to John's point, in our receiving quite a lot of applicants for some of the actual trades in the electricity piece.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Daniel. Your time is up.

We'll conclude with Mr. Cuzner.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by wishing my friend and colleague, Mr. Butt, all the best on his conversation with his 13-year-old and 9-year-old daughters.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** They won't talk to me now.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** The one I'd like to be a fly on the wall for is when he has that birds and bees conversation with them. That would be great television.

When an apprentice is going through the process and has to go back to school, after they have had some time in the field and go back to school, there is a disconnect with the employer. What we've heard from past witnesses is that a lot of the time the slowdown in receiving EI benefits is one of the reasons people are falling out of these programs. It's an interruption in family cash flow.

In 2004 cheques were being issued 80% of the time in 21 days. That was the standard. They were hitting that standard 80% of the time. They've stretched the standard to 28 days, and they're only hitting that 30% of the time now. We're seeing some Canadians going five, six, seven weeks without income, and so they are saying, "I can't pursue this electrical apprenticeship. I'm driving a truck now. I have to do something to feed my family."

We're looking at specifics. What can we actually do? There is the lower piece that some of you have talked about, but then there's that fulfilment and when you have that many people in apprenticeship and with the high rate of non-completion, there has to be some stuff within that. We've attracted them to the idea. They have gotten comfortable with the idea that they want to be an apprentice, but because of the mechanics here, they are falling out of the program and not completing their apprenticeships.

Does it make any sense that the federal government—and we're looking at what the federal government can do—develop a specific program, maybe in partnership especially with the bigger companies? The bigger companies, such as Toronto Hydro, would continue to pay the person while they go back to study, and then they do the business afterwards with the federal government to recoup that money out of the EI fund or whatever it might be, for some kind of consistency in revenue for that household.

First of all, do you see it as a problem? What do you suggest as a possible solution?

**The Chair:** Does anyone care to answer that?

Mr. Burpee, go ahead.

**Mr. Jim R. Burpee:** I'd like Ave to speak to this. Ave is more in touch with this than I would be.

**The Chair:** Okay, Ms. Lethbridge, go ahead.

**Ms. Ave Lethbridge:** Thank you for your question.

As far as apprenticeships go, what we're trying to encourage is that college level diploma that helps them to make entry. Once they're in the apprenticeship program we do pay them. They're being paid. They're hired.

What we need to see is more awareness that the energy industry is a place for good jobs, and that these college programs are a viable career choice from a trades perspective, and that trades positions aren't seen as something of a lower career choice at the end of the day. These are highly skilled technical people. We actually pay their apprenticeship.

• (0945)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thank you very much, Ms. Lethbridge. The bigger companies now...the automotive, I would think, where there are smaller companies, it would be more possible.

Mr. Ives, do you have a comment?

**Mr. John Ives:** In our apprenticeships we have a mix of company trained and using the ministry and the colleges to do the work. Very much so, our apprentices are going to college for their eight-week or ten-week in-school training and they're not getting their first cheque until they're back at work after the course. It's a big problem.

The way you put it, I'd like to have it. We're going into negotiations next year, and we could use your help explaining to the employer that they should be paying these apprentices. Going forward, some sort of system like that for paying the apprentices definitely help because it is an extreme hardship on a lot of apprentices when they don't receive pay going forward.

**The Chair:** There is about 30 seconds. Does anyone else want to comment?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Ms. Steeves wanted to make a comment, I thought.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** I would just say that I would agree that for apprentices that is a big challenge.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Maybe we can get Mr. Butt to help us out, see how he gets along with his two girls, and we can get him to join us with—

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, everyone, for your presentations.

We certainly covered a lot of ground in a relatively short space of time, but I appreciate your cooperation in having you provide the information to us. We'll certainly consider that in our report.

Thank you very much.

We'll have a brief adjournment and then we'll start with the second panel.

I'll suspend for five.

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

**The Chair:** Would the members take their seats.

We have the Canadian Construction Association and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce with us. Each will present for roughly five minutes. Then we'll have a line of questioning.

We do have some committee business to attend to, so I'll try and suspend a bit early for that purpose.

Having said that, we'll start with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Go ahead, Ms. Anson-Cartwright.

**Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright (Director, Skills Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am Sarah Anson-Cartwright, director of skills policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Appearing with me today is Mr. Shabbir Hakim, executive director, Alberta Council of Turnaround Industry Maintenance Stakeholders, ACTIMS, and Construction Industry Stakeholders Association of Alberta.

In February, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce issued a paper called "The Top 10 Barriers to Competitiveness in Canada". At the top of that list was the skills crisis and it will be at the top of our list again in 2013.

This past spring, the Canadian Chamber consulted with its members across the country on the skills crisis. I will give you a very brief overview of employers' views on the skilled trades and apprenticeships.

To begin, Canada can be a frustrating place because of the skills gap. The attitude is often that you are educated first and then you get a job. This approach has to change. We need to improve our bridging between the education system and employment.

The lack of people in the skilled trades is a pressing issue for businesses across the country. There is a huge difficulty in attracting workers to the skilled trades. While there is no one action that the Canadian Chamber recommends, there are several common observations that businesses shared with us.

We heard about the need to remove the differences in accreditation across provinces, if possible, and to encourage the recognition of accreditation across provinces, as the Red Seal program does for many but not all trades.

For employers considering apprentices, cost may be the primary barrier since an apprentice in his or her first or second year may not be as productive. For some employers, collective agreements may make it difficult to get apprentices.

What might government do?

Certainly, there is a need to address the stigmatism over the trades and to shift parents' views on careers in these fields. Also, we were told that either employers need an employment training tax credit or there should be more upfront training in institutions.

What could businesses do themselves to address this shortage?

The business community is not taking on enough apprentices, we were told during our consultations. Many employers opt not to use the financial support for apprenticeships because they lack the time. There are ways to change behaviour in the market, however.

For example, one of our members, Syncrude, requires its contractors' workforces to be comprised of 25% to 30% apprentices, with equal distribution between first and final year of apprenticeship. All ACTIMS owners, that is, Syncrude, Suncor, and Shell, follow this practice. With firms of that size, the contract requirement can have a profound effect on the number of apprentices. It offers a model for other companies to adopt to stimulate skilled trades apprentices.

At the Canadian Chamber, we can raise awareness with employers of best practices for apprenticeships. We can also assist in positioning the skilled trades as in-demand careers. The onus is on us in business to help develop the labour force we need.

Now, let me turn it over to Shabbir Hakim of ACTIMS.

• (0955)

**Mr. Shabbir Hakim (Executive Director, Alberta Council of Turnaround Industry Maintenance Stakeholders and Construction Industry Stakeholders Association of Alberta, Canadian Chamber of Commerce):** Thank you, Sarah.

First off, I wish to thank you for this opportunity to discuss a very important issue facing the economic growth in our country. Canada has a thriving, heavy industrial sector. The portion of industry that I represent has in excess of 1.6 billion workforce hours in pipelines, utilities, and oil sands new construction, which is scheduled to be built by 2020.

I represent a segment of industry that in part is working hard to assist with the attraction, education, development, and sustainment of the apprenticeship program.

There are three items that I'll point out.

Number one, the national owners' forum of the Construction Sector Council is a group of large industrial owners from across Canada that has identified the need for apprenticeship growth as part of its 26 step plan for developing a sustainable resource base.

Number two, working with the Alberta owners and the members of the Canadian executive board of the building trades of Canada, the requirement for sustained apprenticeship growth has been identified as a key success factor for construction and maintenance activities of our large industrial work places.

Number three, members of the oil sands owners community have assisted in the development of the ACTIMS and CISAA entities, which provide a simple mandate for maintenance and construction activities of principally the oil sands sector. Simply stated, these two entities facilitate the supply of skilled and qualified workers for the owners' projects with a focus on Alberta and Canadian content.

Solutions are multifaceted and include non-traditional approaches in the education and marketing of these opportunities for youth and parents. We need to focus on women, aboriginal peoples, mature

workers, immigration, secondary careers for individuals, programs such as helmets to hardhats, and temporary foreign workers.

In terms of the skilled trades, this will only start with apprenticeships and the various programs that assist to identify aptitude and skill. Programs to support the co-op registered apprenticeship program and pre-apprenticeship academic training are a start. The issue remains our timeframe. We require these skills now.

Apprentices play a huge role in these workplaces for the foreseeable future. We need to market our opportunities, create a strategy for growth, modify our approach in our educational institutions, assist with monetary offsets during their education, and force incentives on employers to utilize these individuals as an investment for the future of all Canadians.

Thank you, and we welcome your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Hakim.

We will hear from the Canadian Construction Association. I understand Mr. Bellai will be presenting.

**Mr. Romeo Bellai (Member, President, Bellai Brothers Construction, Canadian Construction Association):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and committee members, for inviting us to be here today to share with you the views of the Canadian Construction Association on this important issue.

My name is Romeo Bellai, and I'm co-president of the family firm known as Bellai Brothers Construction Ltd. We work in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. We have maybe 22 tower cranes you'll see here in Ottawa that belong to us. We're putting up many condominiums and other developments, so you're talking to somebody who is at the grassroots of what's happening.

We are engaged in every kind of construction activity in Ottawa-Gatineau. We are founding members of the Canadian Construction Association, known as the CCA for short. Joining me today is Bill Ferreira of the CCA, who is director of government relations and public affairs for the association. I am also a director with the Construction Sector Council. My interest in apprenticeships is more than theoretical. It is vital to my competitiveness as an employer in the construction industry, which is why I am so pleased to be here with you today.

With regard to the question of why young people are not more drawn to apprenticeships, I blame my generation. As students, we were inundated with messages from the government, guidance counsellors, the media, our parents, and most important, Hollywood, that the key to a happy and comfortable life was found in a white-collar profession, not a blue-collar profession. With few exceptions, almost every movie or TV show, like *Quincy, M.E.*, focused on medical, legal, or business professions, so not surprisingly, everyone wanted to be an MBA, a lawyer, or a doctor. How did I make it to construction? Well, it's a long story, and that's for after.

No one aspired to be an apprentice. These careers weren't glamorous, nor were they viewed as well paying. When I was in grade 6, my teacher asked me, "Romeo, what do you want to be in life?" I said, "Well, I want to be a bricklayer". He said, "Why would you want to do that?" I said, "If it's good enough for my dad, why can't I be one?" As I progressed in school, they were always pushing students more towards academia. Anyway, that's my story.

How do we turn this around? To a degree, workforce demand and higher wages are doing this already in some parts of the country. For example, in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and to a lesser degree in Manitoba, the high demand for construction services has created a shortage of apprentices in some skilled trades, particularly in the electrical and mechanical trades. However, the biggest complaint from most employers about new apprentices is in their lack of basic skills, which goes back to my earlier point. Those students with a high degree of proficiency in math, physics, and language simply go to university, while those with lower proficiency in these essential skills are streamed to the trades.

The trouble is that most trades require a high aptitude in math and language. Without that, young apprentices often struggle with in-classroom portions of their training, which is part of the reason that so few apprentices actually complete their training. I've heard of fourth year apprentices in carpentry not wanting to write examinations because they don't have any writing skills. They're stuck in that vortex of being afraid to write an examination.

How do we overcome this challenge? Well, we need to do a better job of promoting the skilled trades to teachers. You've heard many times that a lot of teachers, who are university trained, forget the blue-collar background of most people in this country. So do guidance counsellors. We need to dispel this myth that anyone can learn the skilled trades, which is simply not true, at least not when it comes to the construction trades.

Another recent problem we have seen is the oversubscription to some trades, while others continue to struggle. For example, in many parts of the country, high school graduates are seeking apprenticeships in electrical trades because they think these trades pay better than others. This is simply not true, and it is placing considerable strain on the training system for electrical apprentices, while other equally valuable and well-paying trades remain under-subscribed. This is a perception issue fed by a lack of information about the trades, which is why we believe that better skilled trades promotion at high school together with training for guidance counsellors could help turn the situation around.

We also feel that better national government advertising is a way to help get this message out to the public.

● (1000)

Everyone here is a member of a political party. You do such a great job convincing us to vote for you, perhaps you can have a program to convince children and kids and students to join the trades.

**Mr. Bill Ferreira:** We didn't do a great job.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Romeo Bellai:** In the 1980s, the federal advertising designed to promote higher education of young people effectively increased university enrollment. These ads, which were prominent in movie theatres and in magazines popular with youth, helped motivate many of us to pursue a university education. What we need now is a similar campaign to help promote the benefits of a career in the trades. This is happening somewhat already, but overall more needs to be done, particularly with teachers and guidance counsellors, who as a result of their own academic experience often hold a not impartial bias toward university for the brighter students.

Over the next eight years, it is estimated that the construction industry across Canada will need to find 320,000 new workers just to keep up with the pace of retirements and demand. Of the 320,000, nearly half of these positions will be filled through domestic training efforts, with the remainder coming through immigration. Now that we're talking about immigration, are we only inviting doctors and university individuals from out of this country to come in? Why don't we try to invite some trades in? That would help.

Clearly, immigration will be part of the solution, but we can also increase our efforts domestically to move the apprenticeship training, particularly among the under-represented groups, such as women and aboriginals. With employers, specifically construction employers, being asked to play an increasing role in the workforce training, many are struggling to find apprentices with the aptitude required for a career in the construction trades. By aptitude I mean the mind, the soul, and the heart. As a result, employers are being asked to play an even larger role in the development of apprentices, often helping them achieve the proficiency in math and language they need to complete their apprenticeship training.

The federal apprenticeship job creation tax credit has been a helpful aid to reduce some of the upfront employment costs associated with the apprenticeship training, although the maximum credit available needs to increase to keep pace with the cost of inflation. I don't believe it has changed in the past six years, right Bill? Currently, the maximum credit available is 10% of the annual salary of an apprentice, up to \$2,000. Increasing the credit would certainly make apprenticeship training more attractive to smaller firms.

The apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant are both extremely useful inducements to encourage potential apprentices to consider a career in the trades; however, again, these grants need to keep up with the rising cost of education to remain relevant. The biggest challenge we find to the uptake of these programs is often the lack of awareness on the part of our members. The national advertising by government has helped, but what we really need is a more focused promotion at trade shows, in industry publications, and at the college level to broaden the knowledge and uptake of programs by industry and apprentices alike.

In closing, let me just say that we don't see any silver bullet—there is no magic wand and it won't happen overnight—that will remedy apprentice training issues in Canada.

What is needed is a more positive promotion of careers in the trades at the high school level. If we repeat it often enough, we will get more people in the trades. We need better training of teachers and guidance counsellors with regard to not only a skilled trades appreciation but also workforce demand, so that we avoid oversubscription in some trades while ongoing shortages remain in other trades. We need better and more positive advertising designed to change the opinion of parents and students regarding the trades. We need better promotion of the apprenticeship pathways and benefits of training to students and business owners. We need better employment promotion regarding government supports for business that engage in apprenticeship training. Finally, we need an increase in the currently available tax credit and grants, so as to realign them with the cost of living, and better and more incentives to train the underemployed, such as aboriginals, youth at risk, and older workers in transition.

With that I conclude my opening comments. I look forward to your questions in the five official languages of construction: Italian, French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

•(1005)

**The Chair:** Well, thank you. You might get two or three.

We'll start with Ms. Charlton.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here this morning.

It strikes me that we have this almost perfect storm, if you will. We have a skills shortage, we have the decline of the middle class, and we have really high rates of youth unemployment and aboriginal unemployment, all of which makes apprenticeship seem an important part of the solution, so I really welcome your comments here today.

I certainly hear what you're saying with respect to the need to make apprenticeships seem more attractive at the secondary education level as a career choice for young Canadians. Unfortunately, I don't think that's something the federal government can get directly involved in because of jurisdictional issues. Nonetheless, we all have to play our part in that.

I wonder whether you'd be willing to comment on this: I'm from Hamilton, a large manufacturing industrial sector. In the 1970s and 1980s, we had really vibrant apprenticeship programs. Companies were willing to invest. They saw apprenticeship programs as investments, not as expenditures. I think now, more and more, companies are seeing apprenticeships as an expense to them because they're not necessarily seeing the payoff. I wonder if you can reflect on why that shift happened and what we need to do to change that mindset back again.

The Europeans are still hugely successful with respect to their apprenticeship programs. They didn't see the same dip that we saw here. I'd be interested in hearing from you whether there was a shift in the way the federal government supported apprenticeships throughout those periods which may account for some of the dips. My colleague was talking about changes in the EI program that made the wait times longer; certainly, that's been entirely unhelpful. That's probably not the only factor that has changed. I know we have the capability to deliver. The building and construction trades, I think, are still the most vibrant part of our apprenticeship program, but we also see other opportunities for apprenticeships not being as vibrant as they used to be.

It's kind of a broad question but I would appreciate your comments. Mr. Bellai, you already started to talk about some of the solutions, but I wonder if we can focus on what we used to have, what we need to get back, and how we might improve on it.

•(1010)

**Mr. Romeo Bellai:** Would you like it from the CCA?

**The Chair:** We'll let you go ahead. You make some comments and I'm sure they will have some as well.

**Mr. Romeo Bellai:** Coming from Hamilton, you have a great labour leader there, Joseph Mancinelli of Liuna. They have a great training centre and they're always looking forward to training new people. One of the challenges they have is also retention of people. That's all based upon the question of whether there's still a job when the person goes from the third year into the fourth year of apprenticeship.



In the EI situation, I think when a person is in transition waiting for the new job, it's very important to have the shortest amount of time possible before the person gets those benefits. It's very helpful in the continuation of a person's dream of becoming a carpenter, a plumber, whatever, that the support, the safety net, is there for those people. A lot of individuals working in construction have families. If they cannot put the bread and butter on the table because they can't do their construction job, they will drive a truck. They will do whatever it takes. They need that EI support, absolutely.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Ms. Cartwright.

**Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright:** I can simply give you a sense of what we heard from our members, particularly small and medium-sized companies. They really take on a huge burden with the investment they have to make when they need to train apprentices. It's not like that in other businesses, where you have a fully trained employee coming to you. There is that general burden that is also affected by the business cycle. If business dips off, their capacity to take on apprentices is going to be affected as well. When they have to see an apprentice go away for that in-class training, that technical training portion and leave them for six weeks, they've lost an individual from among their small workforce. That is another difficulty.

There is also the reality when they have trained apprentices who complete their apprenticeship and get their certification, those individuals then become more mobile in the workforce. There is the issue of losing a fully certified employee after you've invested in their training. The challenge is often very much in making that commitment, the financial burden that falls to the small and medium-sized businesses when they do take on apprentices. It is different, perhaps, in Europe where they have quite a different relationship, shall we say, between the employer, the labour sector, and so forth.

•(1015)

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** I'd like to talk about that for two seconds, if I could. I'll be really quick.

**The Chair:** All right.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** I think we agree on what the issue is, but what is the solution? Where can the federal government step in? Is the European example something we should be striving for? Concretely, what would you like to see the federal government do to assist, particularly, the small and medium-sized industries to make sure that we create a vibrant workforce?

**Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright:** We have not yet had policy resolutions from our members across the country with respect to this specific issue. That said, we have had probably the largest number of resolutions this year on the broader issue of the skills gap. In other words, our members are absolutely seized with developing the workforce they need in the future. With respect to this particular piece, the skilled trades and encouraging apprenticeships, I think we would need to explore that further. But you had a sense of what ideas there are.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that two-second intervention. We'll now move to Mr. Mayes.

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

As I see it, some of the challenge is in the communication of the opportunities in the trades, not only to potential students but also to the educators in the system.

I don't know if you have seen the ads Rio Tinto put out highlighting some of the opportunities in the mining industry. We had the Canadian Electrical Association here, and they were talking about having billions of dollars' worth of work to be done. I would question why they wouldn't spend millions of dollars advertising and communicating the opportunities they have. I think there is a need for visibility of the opportunities in the trades to get young people interested. I'd like to have some comments in that regard.

Ms. Anson-Cartwright, you mentioned that the trades are the only careers for which business has to pay for the cost of the training. Actually, articling in accounting and the legal profession, interning in the health sector, and practicums for education and nursing are all part of that too. It's not just the trades. There is a cost to business.

The other issue is communication and funding. We always refer to government funding. I don't like saying "government funding". I like to say "taxpayer funding", because that's where it's coming from. We have to look at the use of taxpayers' dollars.

One of the things I want to throw out there—this is not a government policy; it's a new idea—is looking at trying to raise funding to pay for these apprentices when they go through these lapses in employment or the challenges Mr. Cuzner mentioned. What about an up-charge on the employer EI premiums that would be pooled for that particular purpose? That's just an idea.

Can you tell me of any ways we can find so that industry pays for the cost of this training and helps meet those funding needs?

**The Chair:** Who would like to start?

**Mr. Shabbir Hakim:** Maybe I'll respond to a couple of those items.

Talking about communication, I support that 100% in the sense that we don't do enough of that in trying to convince young folks to come into the industry. I think the bigger problem and the issue that exists is retention, keeping these young folks who come into the apprenticeship programs for longer periods of time.

We have found through our experience, and I'll speak on behalf of the oil sands industry, which I represent, and the large employers that are part of that, whether they are construction employers or owners of the oil sands projects themselves, they recruit and keep apprentices on a long-term basis, an ongoing basis, on a 12-month approach.

In a typical construction industry, the contractors who work on these owner sites are completely dependent, obviously, on the nature of the work that's coming up. It's very cyclical. As everybody in this room knows, construction work can be very cyclical. Putting aside the residential and commercial aspects of the business that exist, on the industrial projects, the nature of the work is such that it does happen between different periods of time.

The owners, then, by the same token do employ a significant number of apprentices and have over the years. As a matter of fact, the three large owners who I represent through ACTIMS and CISAA—Suncor, Syncrude, and Shell—are all significant owners in Alberta in the oil sands business. Along with that, they do have a significant portion.... I could go into statistics. I have all kinds of paperwork here, but I don't think we have enough time to do that. But outside of that, I believe that the contractor side becomes a bit of a challenge, of course, because if there's no work available, they have to reduce the workforce, and if they have to reduce the workforce, obviously people do get affected by that.

Unfortunately the way our system is set up at the present time, there is no particular requirement to keep certain levels of apprentices, if you know what I mean. If you go through first year, second year, third year, fourth year, we don't currently have a mechanism that says that you will keep  $x$  number of first years, and  $x$  number of second years, third years, or fourth years.

Those are the issues we face. Those are structural issues that need to be addressed probably at the provincial level, obviously. Apprenticeship is provincially driven from that perspective. However, I do believe there is an opportunity through the federal government, through that process, to have a dialogue and to create an atmosphere that allows for that kind of mobility between different levels and for some opportunities for retention.

I'd like to touch on one point that Madam Charlton made about the Hamilton situation, where you have large employers who manage to keep their apprentice labour force on for longer periods of time. I believe that still exists. As a matter of fact, within the large organizations, it still occurs. We've seen many folks graduate from the apprenticeship programs at the large owners' projects. We're talking not about one or two or three but about hundreds of people who have gone through that system. The same folks today are either working in journeypersons' jobs that exist or they're working in jobs that are associated with creating jobs through their own businesses, etc. A lot of that does go on.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Mr. Hakim, Mr. Mayes' time has run out and your time has run out. You can probably answer one of the next questioners to conclude what you wanted to say.

We'll move to M. Lapointe.

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Chair, even though my English is not bad, I will speak in French.

[*Translation*]

I thank our witnesses for their very useful testimony.

You may recall that in 2007, when you were driving along a highway in Quebec or elsewhere, there were signs that said quite plainly that Saint-Hyacinthe needed 24 plumbers, or 24 electricians, immediately. This was just before the crisis.

I know, for having read certain studies, that tens of billions of dollars in economic activity were lost because we were not ready in 2007. To my knowledge, according to the studies that were done,

even though a few years have now passed, we are not in a much better position.

Like everyone else, I want to see economic recovery. When we see a continental economic recovery, and perhaps a global one, I think that we will be facing the same problem. Tens of billions of potential projects will not be launched because we will not have the necessary human resources. In my opinion, after less than a year of economic recovery, we would be facing the same problem.

We are talking about tens of billions of dollars. This time, we need to be ready so as not to miss these opportunities. However, both extremely qualified people like yourselves, and other expert witnesses at the previous hearing, have quoted some very depressing figures. In Ontario alone, we are going to be short 45,000 electricians within five years. In Whitehorse, we would need 15,000 people over a two-year period if ever the mines were to start producing a bit more. These are worrying and dismaying figures.

As opposed to Mr. Mayes, I feel that collectively we can make the decision to invest and to be ready the next time. Governments should not be tossing the problem around like a hot potato.

The following English expression comes to mind:

• (1025)

[*English*]

There comes a point when we have to put a price on stuff.

[*Translation*]

We hear it said, for instance, that SMEs are not participating very much, if at all, in the apprenticeship programs. We also hear it said that young people, the next generation, have very little interest in the skilled trades. So if you can think of solutions, even if they come at a collective cost, do let us know.

For instance, should the 1% the Quebec government provides to support continuing education not be provided at the national level? Yes, there would be a cost. However, is that cost not minimal compared to the advantages economic recovery will provide? When it finally comes, this time, we could create billions of dollars in economic activity, at the rate the economy would allow us to do so.

We know that apprenticeship programs are not well supported by SMEs. We know that a lot of apprentices drop out after the first year. Even if there is a cost involved, what must we do to solve this?

**Romeo Bellai:** Quebec is a province where there are pools of employees. And so, before a plumber can have access to an apprenticeship, the pool has to be open to new requests. The situation is slightly different from that in the rest of Canada. It is always both a provincial and a federal matter.

From the federal side, what can you do? I think that employment insurance benefits should be distributed more rapidly to these people. As for investments, tax credits help employers. That said, the issue is to know how many people we can attract to a given sector, and how many we can keep there.

Promotion is also an issue. In schools, we ask the students to tell us what apprenticeships they want. They tell us that they want to become doctors, lawyers or work in some other white collar occupation.

Once we attract them to a given field, how can we retain them? That is what is difficult. Employment insurance is helpful. Tax credits are helpful. However, it would seem that a cultural change is needed.

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Ms. Anson-Cartwright, do you have something to add?

**Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright:** Thank you, Mr. Lapointe.  
[English]

Two weeks ago, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce hosted a symposium bringing experts together with small-business owners and managers to talk about training in small businesses. We realize that it's a real challenge for them. I'm hopeful that the recommendations from this one-day session, as well as the report we take forward to government, will have some suggestions on how to help small businesses. They realize, as most of us realize, that we're at a tipping point. We have a very tight labour market. In some areas there are critical shortages. We still have some persistent unemployment. At the micro-business level—five employees or fewer—they really need to hang on to those people. It's difficult to allow people to go away. If you lose one of your 10 employees for two weeks of training, that's 10% of your activity missing.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. François Lapointe:** I have one comment on something.

**The Chair:** You can make a short comment and have no response.

We'll move on to the next one after your short comment.

[Translation]

**Mr. François Lapointe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A study done by the unions showed that the younger generation's worst fear was to be forced to do the same work for 30 years. They wonder whether in five years, for instance, they will still be electricians. Fifty years ago, the situation was exactly the opposite. When people had a good job, they were ready and willing to keep it for 40 years.

I think that there is a whole aspect of the skilled trades that is not very well known. People change construction sites and can develop new expertise after five years in another aspect of the trade. That opportunity may provide a solution. These young people can't see themselves doing drywall taping for 45 years. They want to know whether every five years or so, new experiences will enrich their lives. Could the solution be to adapt to those expectations?

**Romeo Bellai:** Absolutely. A worker can become a supervisor or the owner of a company. There is that whole aspect to be considered. That is the system, and this is not publicity or propaganda. We have to present the whole picture. That is what is important.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll move to the next questioner, Mr. Payne.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the witnesses for coming.

In my former life, I was a human resources manager. I worked in the petrochemical industry. We had a lot of tradespeople. We hired

apprentices. Along came the national energy program, and you know what? In Alberta it killed virtually everything. Apprentices were gone. Over the 1990s, apprentices were non-existent, or very few of them were around. The average age of journeymen was in the mid to late 40s and even into the 50s.

You did talk about the ups and downs of the economy and that is continual. Even back then when I was human resources manager, everyone was talking about a good university education. I was looking at people in our industry who were making big money and that continues today. Certainly I've always encouraged people to find a job they like. My dad was an electrician. I'm a politician. I'm not sure how you figure that out.

A young man in my riding by the name of Jordan Bartman is a journeyman welder. He's a very young lad. He's a third-year auto apprentice. He is going to the WorldSkills International competition in Leipzig. Our government has had an opportunity to help fund those kinds of skills competitions. I think they're extremely important. We obviously do have some funding. For small employers there's a \$1,000 tax credit.

I think there is a big problem in trying to get the educators to change from encouraging kids to go to university. When I went to school there were opportunities to have a welding shop or go into the automotive trade or whatever. That doesn't seem to be there these days. Somehow as the federal government, we need to work with the provinces obviously because that's their responsibility, and they need to work with educators.

Have you got some positive suggestions that would help us move in that direction to make that happen?

• (1030)

**Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright:** Thank you, Mr. Payne.

One of our commitments at the Canadian Chamber is the result of having done our consultation. Hearing from businesses across the country made us realize there need to be much better connections between post-secondary institutions and the business community. Even on topics like this, skilled trades, you need to reach into high schools. There are lots of good examples of local chamber members deciding they need to make that overture. Maybe they could get a group of guidance counsellors together to meet business people from the community. Wouldn't that help educate and enlighten everyone about local opportunities?

We want to build on those types of initiatives. Our president has put the challenge to our chamber membership that we increase those connections and make those overtures more formal because it's critical to have programs that are better aligned to future needs in the local communities, and the business people are there to provide that.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bellai.

**Mr. Romeo Bellai:** Yes, I have a lot to say about that.

First, in talking about Europe, there is less of a social stigma being in a trade in Europe than there is in Canada. A lot of individuals in Europe are indentured to one company for the whole apprenticeship period. That's a huge difference compared to here, where a person is transient and goes from employer to employer.

In terms of how we convince our young people to get into the trades, there is an example here in Ottawa where the Ottawa Construction Association has constructed a tour where graduating students and also grade 10 students are taken from the classroom and shown around certain shops right in town to encourage them to think that of it as a potential avenue for them. It's a question of bringing the kids—I shouldn't say "kids" as some of them are young adults—to the sites and showing them that this is what we build. That's very important.

There was something that Monsieur Lapointe brought up. It's not only a trade, like being an electrician or a plumber or a carpenter. You can become a superintendent, and you can become an owner. When you are an owner, you open a business. You hire people. You pay taxes. The whole world goes around.

•(1035)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that. Your time is up.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Don't I have time for a small comment?

**The Chair:** No.

We'll move to Mr. Cuzner and conclude.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Since my colleague wants to bring up the national energy program, I think we might want to reflect on a little more recent history. When I worked in Fort McMurray for nine years, there were two plants: Suncor—well, it was really Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited at the time—and Syncrude.

When Mr. Chrétien put together the royalties package, we got a national energy program friggging reference in this. Knock the dinosaur dung off your approach here, guys.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Mr. Cuzner, direct your questions to the witness.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It unlocked the full potential of the Canadian oil sands. That's when the sector grew. With 80% of the jobs being created in this country—the new jobs—the vast majority have been in the oil sands in Alberta, in Saskatchewan, and to a lesser degree in Newfoundland. That's where we have really seen the jobs grow.

My question for you, Mr. Hakim, is this. Since this wonderful development and the demand that has been put on Canadian workers since this deal was been signed by Mr. Chrétien, is there collaboration among the big players there? When you look at turnaround times, and when you look at the bodies that are needed, when Syncrude does a shutdown in a rotation—there are probably 400 Nova Scotian tradespeople who go in and do one of the major shutdowns—do the companies sit together and say, "Okay, we're going to do our major shutdown in April and the first half of May, and then Suncor will do theirs"? Is there a rationalization for the timing on those big projects?

**The Chair:** Mr. Hakim.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** You have gotten so much better at sharing technology. On the tailings technology that has been developed at Suncor, it seems to be that you understand the importance of

working together on this stuff. Are you doing it with human resources?

**Mr. Shabbir Hakim:** From a human resource point of view, I can speak to that. Certainly, everybody is aware of the fact that there are significant pressures with respect to the availability of human resources. Regardless of the fact of where the folks come from, whether it's Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, or elsewhere, as most people know, Fort McMurray tends to be a place where a lot of people from Newfoundland and the Maritimes as a whole have gone.

Whether some things are being done from a business point of view, whether shutdowns are moved, I believe is your question.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Shabbir Hakim:** Not necessarily. As you know, if there are planned turnarounds, obviously, plants can adjust and do certain things. However, a lot of these plants are getting older as time goes on and shutdowns do occur at different times. It could be an unplanned shutdown that happens. You have no control over that. Where it's possible, certainly, things are taken into consideration. Companies are staggering some of their shutdowns, recognizing that the workforce is not available in February, or March, or April.

We are looking at those kinds of options. Part of it is through this group that I represent, ACTIMS. It does exactly that. It gives us an...

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** When the committee travelled to Fort McMurray, one thing we heard from group after group is the issue of pace, pace in development, pace of investment. I'm wondering if the companies themselves are taking on that issue.

**The Chair:** Perhaps we could have a fairly short response and we'll conclude with Mr. Hakim.

**Mr. Shabbir Hakim:** Quite frankly, in terms of whether the companies are taking that into consideration, absolutely, in terms of looking at workforce situations, as to what's available, what's going to be available. Whether it makes any difference in scheduling turnarounds, it's a different ball game altogether.

**The Chair:** With that, we'd like to thank the panel for presenting. We certainly appreciate your comments and suggestions.

We're going to ask the committee members to hold back as there is some committee business I want to talk to the members about.

Members of the panel are free to go.

•(1040)

We have just a few moments here, but there are a couple of points.

The previous panel was quite loaded in terms of the number of people presenting. I know we're trying to push this study a little too quickly. My thoughts are that we're probably not going to be able to conclude before we break, especially if we don't sit the Thursday before the break. The 14th is a Friday. We're probably going to be out of here Thursday evening, the 13th.

My suggestion would be to dispense with the meeting on the 13th, which is a Thursday. Maybe we could move some of those heavy panels to an extra panel when we come back, for one or two meetings. From what I have seen, there has been quite a bit of interest in this area.

We could hold one more meeting if there were some suggestions for witnesses and perhaps some who wanted to come but couldn't come for this session. You could plan to put them into the second meeting if we need to, but if we don't, we would conclude with one and accept the fact that we'll roll this study into the new year.

I would suggest we not sit Thursday, but I would like to see us complete the report we had on the skills shortages. We would propose to use about 45 minutes of the next meeting for that and the centennial flame issues. You might want to direct your mind to that.

Then we would have December 11, which is a Tuesday, and we're not sitting on Thursday, where we could possibly conclude that report, at least finish it off.

That would be my suggestion and if there's consensus to that, that's how we would instruct the clerk and the analyst to proceed. Is everybody okay with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That's what we'll try to do.

Also, before you, you will find the witness list that we had proposed. It may change somewhat in light of what I've said and the request for the budget. We would need a motion that says, "That the proposed budget in the amount of \$18,100 for the study of economic opportunities for young apprentices be adopted."

**Mr. Brad Butt:** I so move.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion on that? Are there any issues with the budget?

Ms. Leitch.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** I have one question.

I'm not sure how other committee members feel about this, but it's quite expensive to be moving individuals around a lot. We do have the capability for video conferencing. Is this based on knowing that certain individuals absolutely will not be able to come and present to this committee? Have we looked at what our video conferencing capacities are?

If nothing else, it helps witnesses not have to disrupt their days and turn them totally upside down because they're spending time on an airplane.

• (1045)

**The Chair:** We'll get the clerk to answer that.

I might advise for the Saskatchewan-Alberta group of witnesses that were not able to testify because of the votes, we'll ask them to reappear by video conference. That is probably what we'll do.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** This is Canada and it is the winter. The chances of individuals not being able, even physically, to get here because of the weather is another thing you should bear in mind.

**The Chair:** Do you want to respond to that?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Isabelle Dumas):** If I have instructions from the committee that you prefer that I schedule a video conference, it's not a problem. I wasn't aware of that. Right now, if people could come, they would come to Ottawa. If they couldn't, I would offer video conferencing.

The other thing to keep in mind, though, is that we can only have two video conferences at the same time, one per committee. It depends on the availability of that service as well.

**The Chair:** Any comments?

Ms. Charlton.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** I'm completely fine with the approach that you offer, video conferencing for people who otherwise aren't going to be able to get here. I think that's terrific.

With respect to the scheduling, though, I would encourage us as best as possible not to pile in witnesses like we did in the first panel today. It restricts the ability to ask the witnesses questions.

**The Chair:** I felt bad, too.

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** I felt bad for them because if they are coming a long way...

**The Chair:** Exactly.

We're going to rejig the list to make it work better. I think we can do that. That's why we'll end up with one extra meeting, maybe two. It's a good point.

Does anybody else wish to comment on the video conferencing? It's probably something we should work toward and not make it difficult for people, particularly with winter travel, although it's always nice to have the witnesses appear in person.

Let's do what we've been doing and wherever we're able to offer video conferencing, let's encourage that.

Does anybody else wish to make a comment on that?

Mr. Daniel.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Is it cheaper?

**The Chair:** I would hope it's cheaper, for sure.

In today's technology, we probably should be moving toward mostly video conferencing and occasionally witnesses present, but maybe we're not there yet.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Do you need a motion?

**The Chair:** Let's deal with the motion.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** If we could cut one of the witnesses, that would buy us a 4x8 Canada action plan sign.

**The Chair:** All right.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.





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