



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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

HUMA • NUMBER 059 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, November 29, 2012

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Chair

Mr. Ed Komarnicki

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•(0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. I'd like to thank everyone for attending.

The order for today will be to hear from the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the Minister of Labour. Pursuant to standing order 81(5), we'll be dealing with the supplementary estimates (B) for 2012-13. Votes 1b and 5b under Human Resources and Skills Development were referred to this committee.

We will also be dealing with the performance report for 2011-2012. Each of the ministers—and I see there is a good array of officials here as well—will present in the customary fashion, and then there will be questions from the parties.

With that, I would ask Minister Finley to proceed.

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development): Thank you kindly, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to appear before this committee to discuss the work of my department. As you know, HRSDC has a very broad mission. We interact with Canadians at every stage of their lives.

[English]

We also play a key role in ensuring Canada's continued economic success, competitiveness, and long-term prosperity.

Since July 2009, over 820,000 net new jobs have been created in Canada. Now, the hard numbers speak for themselves, but in addition to that, we have over 390,000 more Canadians at work now than compared to the best months we had before the recession. This is really tremendous and should not go unnoticed.

[Translation]

However, as I've said many times, we cannot rest on our laurels.

[English]

We're still dealing with high unemployment in some areas, and at the same time we have labour shortages in other areas, sometimes even where there is high unemployment. More acutely, where we're really feeling the pinch is in the mismatch that exists between the

needs of employers and the skills and labour that are available to them.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce recently described the skills gap as, and I quote: “the major socio-economic challenge confronting this country”, and frankly, ladies and gentlemen, I agree with them.

The issue is about how to grow in light of an aging population of workers who are now starting to leave the workforce. We are sitting here competing globally for skills and for talent.

[Translation]

Things are only going to get worse if we don't do something about addressing the gap that exists in terms of skilling up our own people.

[English]

Let's be clear on something, though. Although we agree with the fact that we have a major issue on our hands in this country, I do not agree that it is the sole responsibility of the federal government to fix it; it can't, nor should it be. Our success will be dependent on the collective ability to be innovative, flexible, and willing to change.

So what are we doing at HRSDC to help? First, we're making changes to the employment insurance program to make it easier for unemployed Canadians to search for and find work. At its core, employment insurance is just that: an insurance program to support Canadians when they're out of work through no fault of their own.

[Translation]

With that support, there has always come the responsibility of being available and actively looking for work.

[English]

I've had the opportunity to discuss these changes with Canadians right across the country, and when I or one of my colleagues has that opportunity, it's clear that Canadians do understand that our government wants to make sure that they're better off working than not. They understand that we want to make sure that employers get the workers they need to run their businesses and they understand how important it is that Canadians right here at home always have first crack at job opportunities before a company can ever hire temporary foreign workers.

The changes to the EI program will help us achieve those goals. Think of the measure coming early next year to better connect Canadians with available jobs in their local areas.

[Translation]

The Working While on Claim pilot project also comes to mind. It allows people to keep more of what they earn, when they accept more work while on EI. We believe that these changes will make a difference, while ensuring that the program continues to support Canadians, as it always has, when they need it.

[English]

In addition to these changes comes our focus on training. Governments do play an important role in skills and training, no question. In fact, our government gives the provinces and territories \$2.7 billion a year for the exact purpose of labour market and skills development programs, but it goes well beyond government at any level.

Partnership is key. Governments, the private sector, and education and training institutions all have a role to play in getting Canadians back to work, diversifying and strengthening our workforce and addressing the skills shortages.

The world has changed, and now there really is no such thing as an unskilled job. That's why my department supports a comprehensive suite of programs ranging from skills development to workplace literacy, from apprenticeship grants to financial aid programs, which have tremendously improved access to post-secondary education.

That takes me to one of my favourite topics, young Canadians, who are by far our greatest human resource in this country. After all, they are our future.

Youth unemployment, although better in Canada than in most countries around the world, sits at double the regular unemployment rate in this country. Why? Because they don't have the skills that employers need. Too many young people are caught in the vicious cycle of no job, no experience—no experience, no job.

●(0855)

That's why we've increased our investment in the national youth employment strategy.

[Translation]

Through Economic Action Plan 2012, we invested an additional \$50 million into this strategy to connect young Canadians with jobs that are in high demand.

[English]

Our approach will match approximately 3,000 young Canadians with jobs in areas where there's a strong need for workers. It's important that we all take responsibility for guiding our young people and our future workforce.

Whether for skilled trades or other jobs in demand in other sectors, it's clear that Canadians of all ages need to have a better understanding of where the jobs are and what skills are required for them.

That's why in August I officially launched the new sectoral initiatives program. Under this program, critical labour market information will be gathered and made available through the Working in Canada website. Giving people better access to better

information will enable employers, workers, and job seekers alike to make better decisions.

[Translation]

Ultimately, Mr. Chair, it comes down to doing things differently.

[English]

That leads me to another topic, and it's an exciting one—social finance.

Social finance is a new area for Canada. Earlier this month I launched a call for concepts to solicit ideas on social finance from both individuals and organizations. I wanted ideas on how we can shape future social policy in Canada or identify new partners. I wanted ideas about how we can get better results from our investment of taxpayers' dollars.

Let's be clear: this is not wholesale change. We're exploring at this stage, but this work speaks to exactly what I talked about at the beginning: the need to be creative, innovative, and willing to do things differently if we want or expect to get better results for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, as I conclude, these are just some of the initiatives under way, but they speak to my department's important role in delivering services to Canadians.

[English]

We will continue to be focused on these goals in a fiscally prudent way as we work to ensure that all Canadians have an opportunity to share in real results—job creation, economic growth, and long-term prosperity.

Thank you.

I'll now turn to my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, please go ahead.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, it was only a short while ago that Minister Finley and I were here to talk about Bill C-44, the Helping Families in Need Act, and I'm delighted to be back again.

That legislation that we were talking about previously showed our government's commitment to the welfare of Canadian workers and their families. We believe that Canadians are entitled to be treated fairly on the job.

With that in mind, we foster good working conditions, constructive labour-management relations, and healthy, safe workplaces free from discrimination, because by doing all these things, we are making a vital contribution to Canada's prosperity and to our overall quality of life.

That said, we can't ignore that uncertain economic situation in which we are working today.

Some workers in our country are still vulnerable, and they are worried about the ability to provide for their families. We know that when Canadian workers were hit hard by the economic downturn—especially those employees whose employers went bankrupt, closed down, and did not pay their workers the money they were owed—Canadian workers did suffer.

That's why in 2008 our government introduced the wage earner protection program, or WEPP: because we wanted to make sure that the workers who were affected like this received timely compensation for their unpaid wages and their vacation pay.

We expanded the WEPP in 2009, and we included both unpaid severance and termination pay as well.

In 2011 we expanded again, to make sure that workers were covered in situations where a company attempted to restructure but was unsuccessful and ended in bankruptcy.

Overall, since the start of the program in 2008, more than \$120 million has been paid to over 53,000 workers. Given the expansion of this program over the time, we are now adding \$1.4 million annually in operating funds to ensure that we deliver to WEPP applicants the benefits they are entitled to when they need them most. Therefore, we're requesting additional funding through the supplementary estimates to fulfill this commitment.

We know that in uncertain times, workers suffer, businesses suffer, and indeed the whole country suffers. That's why our government remains focused on creating jobs, on long-term growth and prosperity, but in that, a crucial part is labour peace. We know that good labour relations help create a stable and a reliable environment in which businesses can thrive, but they also give workers the security that they need to be productive and to support their families.

The Federal Mediation Conciliation Service is a part of Labour Canada, and it really does do a remarkable job in supporting the stable, peaceful, and cooperative labour environment.

FMCS has a section for preventive mediation services. That service helps unions and management to build and maintain constructive working relationships that deal with difficult workplace issues as they arise, not necessarily at a point in time when a collective agreement is being bargained. To make this service available to more clients, we are committing half a million dollars in annual ongoing funding.

I want to make a point here on this issue. Despite the impression that may be created by media or by coverage of certain events, cooperative labour relations in Canada really are the norm. Strikes and lockouts are the exception. Indeed, in the past four years 94% of labour negotiations in the federally regulated private sector were settled without work stoppages when FMCS was involved.

Contributing to harmonious working relationships and therefore to labour stability is really only one aspect of the labour program's goals for federal workplaces. As minister, I firmly believe that a healthy and a safe and a fair workplace is a key element to Canada's formula for success. Indeed, I've called the workplace the engine room for the economy.

The workplace is important because where there's more morale, where there's ingenuity, where there's productivity, Canadian

businesses are helped to compete with the best in the world, so we promote safe and healthy workplaces through both preventive education and reactive strategies. Most importantly, we encourage workers and employers to take an active role in ensuring the health and safety of their workplaces.

● (0900)

This past fall I visited China, and I'm really proud to say that Canada is recognized internationally for our expertise in workplace health and safety.

Lately, as well, we've been focusing on a different aspect of health and safety in the workplace: mental health.

Mental health in the workplace is a significant concern not only for businesses but also for workers and for families. Half a million people a day miss work because of mental health problems. That can translate into a loss of productivity of about between \$33 and \$50 billion annually. Quite frankly, this is something that we have to deal with.

That's why the Government of Canada provided \$367,000 in funding to the Mental Health Commission of Canada to help develop a voluntary national standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace. My labour program provided the commission with technical expertise. The project is a really great partnership because it received funding from Bell Canada and the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace.

What's really exciting about this is that it will be the first standard of its kind in the world. It really is an example of how governments and organizations can work together to help modernize workplace health and safety. We're working with businesses and we're working with unions. They were part of the psychological standard creation. With those two parties and with the help of the government, we are creating these dynamic workplaces where cooperation and fairness are the rule, workplaces where health and safety are integral parts of the culture, workplaces where workers and employers can contribute, innovate, and increase productivity for the benefit of all, including the general Canadian public.

Those are some ways that we in the labour program are helping Canadian businesses and families and continuing to strengthen our economy.

Mr. Chair, I hope this overview has been helpful and I'd be very pleased to answer any questions that you or the committee may have.

Thank you very much for your time.

● (0905)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that wide-ranging overview.

Both ministers certainly have set out the view they have with respect to their current department's performance and where they hope to go.

We're going to move to the first round of questioning. We'll start with Ms. Charlton.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to both ministers for being here.

Like you, I very much enjoyed the time we shared here together with Bill C-44. Since you enjoy being here so much, I wonder if I could start off by asking whether you'd be willing to be here for two hours instead of just one hour, in the same spirit of cooperation that we showed during the debate on Bill C-44.

The Chair: They are scheduled here for an hour and we'll be dealing with that, but go ahead—

Ms. Chris Charlton: I just figured that the ministers, if they have the time, might want to be here. Could you let them respond? I only have seven minutes.

The Chair: No, it's five minutes.

If the ministers wish to respond they can, but you might want to go to your questioning, because the clock is running.

Ms. Chris Charlton: All right, we will certainly do that in a hurry because, frankly, one hour with two ministers for two departments to deal with one of the ministries having the broadest mandate, as you rightly pointed out in your opening, just simply isn't enough for us to do due diligence, which is what the whole estimates process is about for the opposition parties. It's to actually hold the government to account.

Let me go quickly to questions, where perhaps we could just have a yes or no answer to keep us moving.

Ministers, would you commit this morning to providing the committee with the details of your government's austerity measures and how they will manifest themselves with respect to budget cuts, staff reductions, and impacts on services?

Hon. Diane Finley: That is a very broad question. We're here to share with you whatever information from those programs is reflected in the estimates and we'd be happy to discuss those with you.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Ms. Raïtt, would you comment?

Hon. Lisa Raïtt: I concur with Minister Finley's comments.

Ms. Chris Charlton: As you know, the information I just asked for is exactly the information that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has asked for and is now taking the government to court over. Any information you could provide us that would expedite us getting access to that information would be very much appreciated.

Looking at what we know already, we know that EI eligibility has hit a 10-year low. For those who do still qualify for EI, we know that service is falling. Two-thirds of EI claims and 50% of CPP calls are not being answered within the department's own service standards and yet, Minister Raïtt, in your opening comments you just said that you wanted to ensure timely compensation for Canadians. You referred to that in terms of WEPP workers, but of course people on EI are also impacted through no fault of their own.

Minister Finley, you had said publicly that if there were a need, you'd bring on more staff. Obviously the need is there, because you're not meeting your department's own service standards. Could you tell me how many new staff you're budgeting to bring on to deal with both EI issues and CPP issues?

Hon. Diane Finley: Our goal is to be responsive and to provide payment and answer queries in a timely manner. The challenge is that there are seasonal variations, some of them pretty dramatic,

particularly on the EI front. When we saw some surges last spring in terms of the number of EI applications, we did bring in extra staff. Sometimes we reallocate them from other parts of the EI operations; it varies with the circumstances. It doesn't necessarily mean that new people are brought on or that we budget ahead of time, because not all of these surges are predictable.

I am pleased to report to the committee, though, that because we brought in extra people in the spring and we've to some degree changed how we handle these responses to be more efficient, our processing times are now getting back in the range of the seasonal norms. Again, there are cycles throughout the year when demand rises or it falls significantly. We try to even things out so we can have predictability for the workforce who are there.

● (0910)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Minister, as you know, when you're on employment insurance or you're trying to access EI, every single day matters, because you're without any kind of income.

I believe the standard in the ministry with respect to EI appeals is that EI appeals will be heard within 30 days. It used to be that standard was met 50% of the time; now, it's being met less than 30% of the time. I don't think the 70% of people for whom that 30-day deadline isn't being met are going to be comforted by the fact that you're working toward some kind of seasonal average. We're talking about tens of thousands of appeals being heard.

I wonder if you could talk about your plans to create new staffing positions to deal with those appeals. Frankly, I'm really worried. You're creating a tribunal of 39 people to hear appeals that are right now being heard by hundreds, and already the standard isn't being met.

Hon. Diane Finley: This is why it's so important, as we transition to the new tribunal in the new year, that we make sure we keep staff from the old system to clear out any backlog that exists. We want to make sure those cases are dealt with in a timely manner. Going forward, we're going to have specialized people dealing with these cases on a full-time basis. We anticipate that through a variety of ways we will have better consistency and more responsiveness.

One of the things that delays payment of EI is when employers or the employees do not submit complete forms. If there is information missing or it's wrong, or it's incompatible with information they previously submitted—

Ms. Chris Charlton: There's no more help at Service Canada centres for people filling out those forms.

Hon. Diane Finley: Actually, there is. What we're doing—

Ms. Chris Charlton: You're asking people to go online.

I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt and be rude about it, but I do want to get my last question in as well.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Minister, if you want to finish responding to that question, you can.

You could maybe start the second round with your question, if you like.

Go ahead and finish your response.

Hon. Diane Finley: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To add, we find that the processing speed and the turnaround in getting payments to claimants rises dramatically when both the employer and the employee file online. That system makes it possible to get things done faster and more accurately. That's why we're encouraging employers in particular to make sure they are filing electronically. It does speed up the process for everyone.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move now to Mr. Daniel, who might be sharing his time with Mr. McColeman. We'll see.

You have five minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I will be sharing my time with Mr. McColeman.

Thank you, Ministers, for being here.

Minister Finley, you touched on two things that are close to my heart, and those are the trades and young people.

Our committee is currently undertaking a study on opportunities for young people, with a focus on the skilled trades. I know our government has made significant investments in this area, and I was hoping you could elaborate a bit more on the outcomes of this funding. What are the real results that we are seeing for our young people?

Hon. Diane Finley: We are very pleased to see that the results of some of the new programs that we brought in are enhanced.

As you're probably aware, there is a significant shortage of skilled tradespeople in this country. In fact, a few years ago I was invited to a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new skilled trades college. The ribbon-cutting was put off because they couldn't finish building the college because they couldn't get enough skilled tradespeople to do the work.

That's when we decided we really had to do something about this problem. We had already introduced the apprenticeship incentive grant for people going into the trades, but also for employers. So far, some 265,000 Canadians have taken advantage of that program. We brought in the completion program for apprentices a few years later, and over 80,000 people have claimed access to it. That's a good start.

Going beyond that, we know there are a number of young people who have challenges. I've mentioned, for example, the no experience, no job—no job, no experience cycle. That's why we have programs like Career Focus and Skills Link. In fact, in Budget 2012 we put an additional \$50 million into helping these young people get over the barriers of no experience, particularly helping

them get experience in the areas where there is high demand so they're likely to have a much more successful and stable career.

There have been a lot of very positive results, and that's not even starting to address the other things we've done through the Canada youth employment strategy, which includes the Canada summer jobs programs.

The pathways to education program is now helping some 10,000 students who might otherwise be at risk of dropping out of high school to complete high school and go on to post-secondary education. It provides them with the full wraparound supports that they need—not just financial, but the mentoring, the coaching, and all sorts of good stuff. We really believe our future workforce is our young people, and that's the future of our country.

● (0915)

Mr. Joe Daniel: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Ministers, thank you for being here as well.

I'm going to move very quickly here because I know the time is limited.

I'd like to pick up on the subject of giving Canadians work. I'm pleased to see that you've included in the estimates the Third Quarter project. This project, I believe, has great potential in connecting businesses with older, experienced workers in a very worthwhile initiative. As you know, in our ridings we're neighbours. We have a strong and experienced industrial work base and lots of people with lots of skills.

Can you provide the committee with your thoughts on this project moving forward?

Hon. Diane Finley: I'm really very excited about this project. It started out west, and we're getting really great results. That's why we were pleased to be able to help them by providing funding and expanding this program right across the country. In fact, we're putting in \$6 million over the next three years.

People who get past 50 find it harder and harder to find work, partly because, in many cases, they haven't had to look for it in a long time. Facing some of the technology of today's job search can be a bit daunting. This program provides assistance with that. It's making sure, also, that employers are aware of the tremendous talent, skills, and resources that people over 50 can offer. Too often these people are written off because they're “too old”.

I've heard it said that today's 50 is the new 40. People are living longer. When they hit 50, they have a tremendous amount of experience to offer. This program matches these workers with employers who are finally recognizing the value that these people can offer. I think it's a great way to make sure that everyone's talents and skills get put to work productively. That's what we really need right now.

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'll pass, because it's not enough time.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll move to Ms. Boutin-Sweet.

[*Translation*]

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

Madam Minister, thank you for joining us today.

Supplementary estimates (B) contains a vote for \$3.5 million in additional funding for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, or HPS. The public accounts, however, show that \$31 million in homelessness funding was not spent before it expired, in other words, 2011-12.

Yet, it is a fact that at least 300,000 people are homeless, and the situation is getting worse. That is all too clear in my riding of Hochelaga, where shelters are full, summer and winter. In addition, Montreal has RAPSIM, a support network for people who are homeless and alone. That city has the biggest homelessness support network. Nevertheless, the organization's funding was not renewed for the first time this year, despite all the recommendations of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the federal-provincial committee. It is the only agency in the country whose funding was not renewed, despite recommendations.

In light of such an acute need, why do the supplementary estimates call for just \$3.5 million, instead of the full \$31 million in the previous budget that lapsed? What's more, even that \$31 million would not be enough to meet the need, especially since it was never indexed.

Why did you not sign off on RAPSIM's project?

Hon. Diane Finley: You asked a number of questions. I will try to answer each of them.

Fighting homelessness is very important to us. That is why we joined forces with the Department of Health to invest in a new program called At Home. Under that initiative, \$100 million will be invested to determine whether a new system would allow us to tackle homelessness more effectively. And we have had a number of positive outcomes.

• (0920)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Yes, I am familiar with the project, which is ending soon, by the way. But why did you not reinvest that \$31 million instead of investing just \$3.5 million?

Hon. Diane Finley: We issued a call for proposals in 2011. Unfortunately, the election that year fell during the call for proposals period. That is why we—

[*English*]

reprofiled. We moved the funding from one year into the next to make sure the funding was still going to homelessness, even if not in the year in which it was intended.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: The money was already in every region, and the agencies were already aware of the available funding. That money was already there. So it doesn't apply.

Hon. Diane Finley: There is \$3.5 million. It moved from one year to the next.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Why didn't you invest the \$31 million that was not spent despite the needs?

Hon. Diane Finley: No. We spend all the money. I insist that all of it be spent, but it changes from year to year. Keep in mind that the call for proposals period was interrupted by the election.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: But there is still \$31 million that was not spent from the previous budget.

Before I run out of time, I have a motion, Mr. Chair:

That the committee ask the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to provide it with the information requested by the Parliamentary Budget Officer regarding the budget cuts in her department.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just hold on a moment with respect to that motion.

We'll stop the clock.

I would ask you to perhaps write out your motion for the benefit of the clerk, who will have a look at it. We can deal with it on an immediate basis or—I've stopped the time on your clock and you have one minute left—you can conclude your time and provide us with the motion, and we can deal with that motion when the minister's questioning has concluded. If you wish to have it dealt with on an immediate basis, I'll just wait until you provide the motion. You have a minute left.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Okay.

The Chair: Okay. So you'll finish your minute, and then you'll provide us with the motion and we'll have a look at it to make sure it's in order. Then we'll deal with it. Okay?

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: I am coming back to the last part of my question, on RAPSIM, since you didn't answer.

Why wasn't that organization's funding renewed? It was the only group in Canada whose funding was not renewed.

Hon. Diane Finley: I want to be clear. There was \$28 million that we could not spend this year because of the interruption resulting from the election. That amount will be spent next year. I just wanted to clarify that.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: That answers the first part of my question.

Hon. Diane Finley: As for specific applications, we receive a number of funding requests for good projects, but—

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Yes, but the agency was already aware.

Hon. Diane Finley: —it's never possible to give everyone funding.

[*English*]

We can't always provide funds for all of the good programs and, unfortunately, sometimes difficult choices have to be made.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: The federal-provincial committee and the agency were already aware of the envelope available, and on the basis of that envelope, they approved the project. It was approved at every stage of the process. The project stalled at your office, when you decided not to approve it. Why didn't you approve it?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley: No, I'm sorry, but I couldn't comment on specific cases—

• (0925)

The Chair: Excuse me, Minister, just for a moment.

Madame Boutin-Sweet, your time is up, but I will allow the minister to respond to your question.

Go ahead.

Hon. Diane Finley: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We get many requests for funding, and many times they're very good applications. Unfortunately, they can't all be funded all the time.

I can't comment on a specific case. That said, we are very pleased with the quality of applications coming in and we try to fund as many of them as possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now move to Ms. Leitch.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ministers, thank you for being here today.

Thanks as well to all the officials who've come here to help answer our questions.

I have a number of questions for Minister Raitt with respect to the labour program.

First, you touched on the wage earner protection program in your opening remarks. As you mentioned, additional funding has been allocated to the WEPP, I think approximately \$1.4 million.

I was wondering if you could give our committee a bit of a perspective on how that additional funding will be used and how it will benefit the program, and specifically where it will be targeted.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Sure. Thank you very much.

As I outlined in my opening remarks, WEPP is a very important program that we brought into place to deal with issues that were certainly out of the hands of employees. It's stark reality that sometimes businesses close their doors, go bankrupt, and don't pay their employees. That's where the government steps in.

What we do is we fill a gap of time for the employee. The employee has a right to the money should the company go to bankruptcy; however, sometimes it can take a very long time for their claim against the company to make its way through a process. What we do instead is step into the shoes of the employee and make sure they receive as much as they can, to a cap level that we have

with respect to unpaid wages, vacation pay, and, as I said, severance pay and termination pay too.

We want to make sure that people who are already dealing with the fact that they've lost their jobs don't have to worry about getting their unpaid wages, that they have something. We go on, hopefully to collect from the company throughout the process and make sure we get the money back for taxpayers.

Since 2008 it has been a used program. We've spent, as I said, about \$120 million for 53,000 workers. That's 53,000 workers who didn't have to worry about how they were going to feed their kids the next day because they weren't paid their wages by a company that suddenly went bankrupt. We are the backfill, in a sense, through the WEPP program.

Of course, after those issues are dealt with or they make their applications to us for trustee in bankruptcy, it is for the eligible worker, if they qualify, to apply for EI for their income support going forward. That's how the two departments work well together, and that's why it's a good program.

What we want to make sure of, in a service standard, is that applications are processed within a 42-day service standard. As a result, we've asked for more funding, with the realization that the program itself has expanded with the additions we've made on it since 2008.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Thank you very much, Minister.

I think I have a little bit more time to ask a short question.

The Chair: You do. You have two minutes. Go ahead.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Very good.

One thing that I know you're very passionate about, Minister, is mental health in the workplace. Mental health issues have a significant impact on not only businesses but also on workers and how well they function—what their productivity is, what their capacity is in the workplace.

I was wondering if you could expand a little bit more on not just the tool you spoke about, the new voluntary tool, but some of the items that the Government of Canada's labour program is focused on to support mental health in the workplace.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Thank you.

You know, I was very fortunate to be named minister in this portfolio in January 2010. I had a meeting with my counterparts across the country within, I think, 11 days. We made this part of our agenda with the provinces and territories, because it's such a growing issue.

When I came from my previous employment, I fully understood the effect mental health can have on the workplace. When you're dealing with a company with fewer than 100 employees, having even one person who is ill, for whatever reason, or mentally ill specifically, can have an effect on the workplace. It affects everybody around the person and it affects productivity at work. What I found as an employer was that I really didn't have the tools to deal with this in the workplace.

As Canadians, we all want to help. We're good people. However, we need to know what to do, especially in certain circumstances when you really don't have any idea what you're supposed to do. That's why it became a very big part of my portfolio.

I'm very pleased with the progress we've made on it. We've had cross-country consultations. We've had national round tables. We've taken part in great campaigns by the private sector to try to eliminate stigma in the workplace, culminating in this psychological standard, but I would also emphasize that this is a work in progress. This continues. Having this voluntary standard will help us have tools for the worker and for the employer, but we still need to be chipping away at it.

In 2009 Don Drummond, the former chief economist at TD Bank, was the one who said that it's 35 million lost workdays each year. Disability costs are about 12% of a company's payroll. These are things we know. With good policies, with good tools in the workplace, we can help ameliorate this situation. We can help make sure that we're as productive as we possibly can be, and more importantly, that we are looking after our workers and our families.

• (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up.

We'll now move to Mr. Cuzner for five minutes.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I thank the ministers and the officials for being here today.

Ms. Finley, I asked a question a couple of weeks ago with regard to processing times. Your response was that back in 2004, it was taking 10 weeks to turn around a claim. This may be best directed at Ms. Jackson, because I understand that you don't have all the figures.

Figure 5 on page 25 of the 2005 departmental performance report shows that 80% of the claims were being turned around in 21 days. That's a fact. They were turning around claims, from filing to completion, 80% of the time, in 21 days. Currently, the standard has been extended to 28 days, and you're only hitting that 30% of the time. The trajectory seems to be downward. These are the department's numbers. Am I out to lunch on this? Please explain.

Hon. Diane Finley: First of all, when you made a reference to 2004, my response to your question was that in my riding, people going in to make claims were being told by the Service Canada operation that in our area, it was taking 10 weeks. I'm going on the basis of that point in time.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Why was it taking 10 weeks?

Hon. Diane Finley: That's a good question. I know it's one I asked.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Well, you've been minister now for a number of years. I would think you would want to figure that out.

Hon. Diane Finley: As you pointed out, that was in 2004. That's what we're trying to prevent. That's why we're going to automation. We're modernizing the system. In terms of the numbers you just cited, I believe that Karen can provide you with some clarification on that.

The Chair: Go ahead, Karen.

Ms. Karen Jackson (Senior Associate Deputy Minister, Chief Operating Officer for Service Canada, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): I would be happy to.

As the minister mentioned in response to the previous question, we are back to processing times that are around the seasonal norm, so in mid-November we were at 80% of claims being processed, or notification of non-payment, within 28 days.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: What year did you stretch the standard from 21 to 28 days?

Ms. Karen Jackson: I'm sorry. I do not have that information with me today.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: The standard has been changed from 21 to 28 days.

Ms. Karen Jackson: You are correct.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Okay.

I know that if I were hurting my constituents because it was taking 10 weeks to turn around a claim, and I became minister, with the horsepower you have here in this room today, I'd find out why it was taking that long.

With respect to working while on claim and the change made from 40% of benefits to now 50% of total income that you're allowed to keep, had that been an increase of 50% of the benefit being received, I think it would have been a real benefit to those working while on claim. The part that's hurting Canadians, the aspect that's hurting Canadians, is the dropping of the provision for allowable claims. Why was that dropped? Did you see it as a disincentive? Why was the allowable earnings aspect dropped? Explain that one to me.

• (0935)

The Chair: Ms. Jackson, do you want to answer that?

Ms. Karen Jackson: The allowable earnings provision in the "working while on claim" situation was changed, but it's still there. What the pilot, as of October, put in place was this: from the beginning of a claim, for every dollar earned, there's 50¢ that can be kept, without having an impact on the claim.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: That's 50% of total allowable earnings. The previous pilot project was based on the amount of EI you were receiving. You were allowed to receive up to 40% of the amount you were making. If you were making maximum EI, you could make \$195 without losing a nickel. That's the truth.

But now people are working, and it's the ones on the bottom end who are being hurt. I'm not saying this for any political gain; I'm trying to inform. Maybe your officials aren't getting it, but people are being hurt. They're asking to be paid under the table because of the change. They go out and work an eight-hour shift at 10 bucks an hour. Now they're losing \$40 of that, and if you have to look after a babysitter and drive to a workplace, so much the worse. It's because of the allowable earnings provision. There must have been some kind of motivation to drop this provision.

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

Minister, you'll want to respond, so go ahead.

Hon. Diane Finley: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under the old system, people were allowed to earn the maximum, \$75 a week, or 40% of their—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: No, not 40%.

The Chair: Let the minister finish.

Hon. Diane Finley: It was one or the other. There was a max on it. We saw that there was a definite demotivation, discouragement, within the system for people to work beyond roughly one day. If they were at minimum wage, \$10 an hour for a seven-and-a-half-hour day, that's \$75. If they worked day two or day three, everything got clawed back. That was a disincentive, a major disincentive. We heard that from so many people, workers and employers alike. People were telling employers they couldn't come to work because of the EI cost.

Our goal was to make sure that whenever people work, they're better off than when they don't. Now, with the new system, people who are on claim get to keep 50% of every dollar they earn, right up through day four to the max.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I'm seeing the officials shaking their heads, and they're not getting it.

The Chair: Perhaps you could conclude your comments, and your time is up, Mr. Cuzner.

Conclude your comments, Minister, and then we'll move on to the next questioner.

Hon. Diane Finley: We recognized that some people were having difficulty transitioning to this new program, so we brought in provisional measures that would allow people who were on this program last year to opt in or out of the new program, whichever was in their better interests.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now move to Mr. Butt.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for joining the committee today. We certainly appreciate your being here.

Prior to being a member of Parliament, I spent a lot of time in both the housing and the not-for-profit sectors. Minister Finley, I was just delighted to hear a couple of weeks ago the announcement on social financing. I'd like to get a little more detail on how this innovative approach will help us in dealing with the challenges of poverty, housing, homelessness, and other issues that we're all trying to come to grips with in our communities. Can you provide the committee with some greater detail on what we're hoping to achieve through this strategy?

Hon. Diane Finley: Social financing is a new concept. It's being looked at around the world. Governments recognize that they can't solve all the problems all by themselves, and that they shouldn't have to. Quite frankly, there are a lot of people out there—individuals, organizations, not-for-profits, corporations—with excellent ideas. They are committed to providing funding to solve these social challenges, whether it be affordable housing, illiteracy, or recidivism. There is such a long list of social challenges.

We do not have a monopoly on good ideas, as a government. We want to tap into other people and say, "Hey, if we keep doing things the same old way we've always done them, we cannot expect better results. It's not reasonable, so let's try new things." Let's hear what other people have in the way of innovative ideas to address these challenges, and let's reward them if they get results. We're taking existing funding and asking how we can leverage it better to help more Canadians get better results. I'm really quite excited about it.

A couple of weeks ago I launched the call for concepts. We're asking people to submit their ideas, very high-level, before the end of December, so that we can say, "All right, what are the things out there that we could be doing better to get us better results?"

A simple example of that would be something like the pathways to education program. That was a program that was not government-funded for many years. They were getting good results. We partnered with them. Now they're getting more of those better results right across the country, and that's good for all of us.

● (0940)

Mr. Brad Butt: Thank you, and I appreciate that.

A couple of weeks ago in my riding on a Saturday morning, I held an employment skills development workshop for my constituents. Service Canada came out. We had a number of other organizations that are doing some very good work on the ground. The feedback I got from the residents who came was that they actually didn't realize there were so many support services there to help unemployed people find work—both programs that the provinces deliver as well as what we're delivering federally.

Are we continuing to look at better ways to make sure that the unemployed know about the support services there? As you say, it's not just ones that we deliver directly as the federal government, but the ones in which we're partnering at a number of newcomer service agencies. My riding is quite multicultural, and they provide support services right from basic English language training to job preparation and preparing them for the job interview.

What are we doing or what are the plans to make sure that...? Other than the MP taking some action to do that, what else are we doing to make sure that if someone is unemployed and looking for work, looking to improve their skills, they know what's available? What are we looking at on a go-forward basis to make sure our residents know about the great support services that are out there and available?

Hon. Diane Finley: You raise a really good point. As I said in my opening comments, one of the single biggest challenges to our future economic growth is going to be the availability of the skills that employers need, so a key focus of our government is to provide access to training, going back to school, and to help support people and families when they do that.

We brought in a number of programs, such as the labour market agreements with the provinces, for example. Those are for people who aren't eligible for EI to help them get counselling to identify a career that might be good for them, or get access to training that might be appropriate. There's funding for them if they're ready to start a new business.

We've partnered with all the provinces and territories for the labour market development agreements. We provide funding and they provide access to training and career guidance, helping to make people aware of just what supports are available.

We brought in the targeted initiative for older workers to help those 55 and over switch careers once they've lost their job through mass layoffs, as we've seen in so many cases, particularly in smaller communities. Now we're helping young people get through the barriers they have to employment.

There's a broad range of things we're doing. We're letting people know. We have advertisements or commercials on television to make people aware, and we have our websites. We work with our partners in the provinces so that they can help people who are at the front line looking for these supports and make sure that people know about them. Of course, there are also 600 Service Canada outlets right across the country.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Butt. Your time is up.

We'll now move to Mr. Cleary for another round.

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

Ms. Finley, I have some questions, and my questions are actually a follow-up to some questions that Mr. Cuzner asked.

We know that there's a problem everywhere with employment insurance in terms of turnaround time and in terms of delays, which is a major problem, obviously, for people who need employment insurance. They have no other income. Your officials said that by mid-November their stat is that 80% of claims were processed within 28 days. I know that's better than it was—80% of claims were processed within 28 days.

That sounds good. Again, it's better than it was, but your officials also acknowledged that the benchmark has been changed from 21 days to 28 days. The benchmark has been increased. Your officials were asked point blank when that change was made in the benchmark, but they couldn't say when.

My question is this: why was the benchmark changed? Was it changed because you didn't have the personnel in your department to handle the claims? Is that why? Can you expand on that?

• (0945)

Ms. Karen Jackson: I can explain a bit here about how this works at the beginning of someone's claim.

First of all, when someone applies for EI, there's a two-week waiting period, so that gives you 14 days. Then, as part of the rules of the program, there are biweekly reports required from claimants. They need to inform us that they continue to be unemployed and that they are looking for work. If you think about 14 days plus seven days, that gets you to 21 days, but you've got biweekly reports, which would take you to 28 days, so I suspect that there was something in the way we were managing and delivering the program, dealing with those timeframes, that did result in the change to the 28 days.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: I find it hard to believe that with all the horsepower here, as Mr. Cuzner noted, that you can't say why or when exactly the benchmark was changed.

I want to move on to another question. I only have another minute.

Ms. Finley, you backtracked, and thank you very much for doing that, on some changes to the working while on claim regulation. I'm wondering whether or not you're considering backtracking on any other changes that you've made to the employment insurance system, changes that impact seasonal workers as badly as they do in Atlantic Canada in particular.

Hon. Diane Finley: I've been very clear when I've been in Atlantic Canada, and indeed everywhere else. Our goal is to help these people get as much work as possible. They'll be better off for it, and their families will be better off. That's why we're bringing in the connecting Canadians with available jobs assistance. It's so they can find work.

If they're seasonal workers and there is indeed no work available for them in the off season, EI will continue to be there for them, just as it always has. However, with the right to EI comes a responsibility, and this has been there for generations: the individual has a responsibility to demonstrate that they are actively looking for work and that if reasonable work is offered, they will accept it.

Again, on the basis that we want to make sure that when people work, they're better off than when they don't, we're helping them to find work. We know that even in areas of very high unemployment, there are skills and labour shortages. The communities where those shortages exist are going to be better off if people are working. We want to make sure that the EI system doesn't discourage people from working but helps them to get the jobs that are going to make them and their families better off.

The Chair: Monsieur Lapointe, you don't have much time. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Very well.

There are two things I'd like you to comment on.

First of all, I want to pick up on what Mr. Cuzner was saying. The old calculation for low income workers was more beneficial, and everyone has told us so. Under the new calculation, people are losing \$20, \$30 or \$40 a week.

One answer touched on the matter of the three days. But in the tourism industry out east, in the winter people don't have three days. They might come in on Saturday to clean a hotel, and that's it. So you can't count on that; it hurts people.

Can you finally admit that is true, that 100,000 Canadians aren't lying when they say they're losing money under the new system? Back home, people who ask to go back to the old calculation are no longer served at the Service Canada office. They are given a form they have to fill out by hand and they have to use the telephone system. They need 20 to 30 hours a week to justify going back to the old system, at 40%.

So how do you explain the fact that these people are being treated like second-class citizens, all because they've opted for the old calculation?

Hon. Diane Finley: That is precisely the reason that we introduced transitional measures. If some people prefer the old system—

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Lapointe, your time is up, but I will allow the minister to finish answering the question.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Finley: If some people prefer to have their benefits calculated under the old system, like the previous year, they can do so. But if they are better off under the new system, they can choose to use it. We suggest they decide which system is better for them towards the end of the benefit period.

● (0950)

Mr. François Lapointe: That wasn't my question. Why are those people being forced to fill out paper forms?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll move to Mr. McColeman.

Go ahead.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'd like to direct my question to Minister Raitt.

Minister Raitt, you mentioned the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in your comments. We know you've made reference to this quite frequently over the past year, especially in light of some of the labour disputes that have occurred. We also know that in Budget 2011 our government made an investment for the expansion of preventive mediation.

I'd like you, if you can, to tell the committee about what this supplemental funding is being used for and how it assists mediation and conciliation to become more efficient.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Thank you very much for the question.

We've had these services for preventative mediation since about the mid-1990s, and what we've seen from these services is that they're very successful.

I can give you great examples from across the country. In the east, Bell Aliant works with their union, and they went from a really difficult situation with a hard strike and lots of bad feelings to a wonderful working relationship where they deal with issues as they come up. They have no problems bargaining their own collective agreement and having a seamless working relationship.

A lot of it's due to the fact we have officers from FMCS working with them almost on a monthly basis, helping them go through agenda items and keeping the conversation going.

We saw what a great success it was. When you go from the brink of a work stoppage and the potential for violence and lots of acrimony to negotiating a collective agreement at the table prior to it even expiring, it's well worth our taxpayer dollar. It is a great investment.

Building on that, we decided it was a good time and a good place to be able to offer this service more broadly across the country. The department has been a lot more open about advertising the availability of the services. In Burlington a couple of weeks ago we had a workshop that invited lots of federal and not necessarily federally regulated workplace players to the symposium just to describe what preventative mediation is and how it can work.

The key with preventative mediation is that both parties have to agree to submit to it and to work on it. Our pitch is that when you do things, first of all, it's well worth the investment by us, but when the workplace partners do it, it's extremely beneficial to their company and to the lives of the workers.

I'm looking forward to more results. I hope we have great success, because the more time we spend in preventative mediation, the less time we spend in trying to put together collective bargaining agreements in a very acrimonious and sometimes unnecessarily confrontational way.

Mr. Phil McColeman: This question is on slightly different subject matter, but it is still pertaining to workers, because as the Minister of Labour, your portfolio deals with them.

You've talked frequently about the fact that in your portfolio you would like to see every worker return home safely from every day of work.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Yes.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I know the labour programs in your ministry are geared toward the prevention of injury, and you have advanced them, so it is a key focus for you.

Can you expand a bit on that area of your portfolio?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Absolutely. That is the bedrock, at the end of the day, of our workplaces. It's making sure the workplace committees, which are made up of both representatives of employers and employees, know and understand the rights of workers and the rights of employers, and the obligations on both on health and safety in the workplace.

The role we play in government is really an educative side of it, making sure that people understand what the best practices are. What the rules and the regulations are, of course, is important too. It's really just supporting these players in developing their own workplace for health and safety.

We have fantastic labour inspectors who are on call 24/7 in the case of a complaint or a difficulty or a problem. I know they work hard and I know they visit far, remote workplaces, from correctional facilities in Yellowknife all the way to facilities on the east coast, in B.C., and everywhere else. I'm grateful for the work they do in helping to make our workplaces healthy and safer.

It is the obligation of the people in the actual workplace to know they have rights. The most important right a worker has in the workplace is the right to refuse work if they feel it is dangerous. I think that's the one piece of education we can provide to all, because then you can take matters into your own hands. If you work with your committee first within the company, and then if you don't get any kind of result from that, you can come to Labour Canada for it. I think it's important for people to know that especially.

We talk a lot about youth employment strategies. My side of the fence with respect to the youth is that I want my kids to know that when they have their first job, if they're asked to do something they feel is unsafe, they have the right to refuse it. I think we're better off as a nation for having those rules in place.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up. That was a good point.

I'd like to thank Minister—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I have a point of order.

Mr. Chairman, in response to a legitimate question that was posed by me and my colleague Mr. Cleary with regard to processing times and why there was an extension of the standard from 21 days to 28 days, the response from the official was that up front there was already a two-week waiting period.

That waiting period applies to the applicant, not the processing time.

I would ask, Mr. Chairman, if you could ask the officials to provide the committee with an explanation as to why—because I'm not satisfied with the answer we got today—the standard was increased to 28 days.

The Chair: This is not a point of order, so I won't consider it as such.

The question you have is probably a fair and legitimate question. I'll leave that up to the department officials and the minister if they wish to respond to the committee, and they certainly can, but it's not a point of order.

I'd like to thank Minister Finley and Minister Raitt for appearing. You're certainly welcome to leave with your officials.

I have some points of order to deal with, and also a notice of motion that I will rule on shortly after I am done with the points of order, but for the moment, we thank you for appearing. You're free to leave with your officials or to stay if you wish.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Chair, I have a point of order before we move in camera.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just a second. I'll hear your point of order.

All right, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: While we're still in public, I would like the committee to deal with my motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're still in public.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: I would like a recorded vote, please, while the meeting is still public.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I have a motion.

The Chair: Just a minute. I'm going to deal with the motion, but I would ask the members to come back to the table. We're still—

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: —in public. The camera is rolling.

I will give a ruling on the motion, and we will deal with it.

I'll wait a few moments for the room to clear and for the members to get back to the table.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I'd like to go in camera, please.

The Chair: Well, this is in public, and I need to deal with that ruling in public because it was raised during a question period in public and I could have dealt with it there and then. However, I asked the member to delay the motion if she wished to until the end of the meeting so that I could consider it, and I'll make that consideration with the camera on.

We'll wait for the members to get back.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: But part of that is that the vote be in public.

The Chair: That's another issue. We'll get there when I deal with your motion.

Let's just hold on until we get all our members back, and then we'll deal with your motion.

All right, I think we have all of the members back.

There are a number of things we have to do. We have to vote on the supplementary estimates.

Before we do that, there is a motion that came forward from Ms. Boutin-Sweet. I will indicate that first of all that the motion that she brings can be brought at any time, with appropriate notice. We know that's a two-night, 48-hour, two-sleeps kind of notice. If you wanted to bring it again, you could.

With respect to the notice itself that you've brought, you can bring a motion that relates to the subject matter that's under consideration. We can deal with it on that basis.

First of all, I'd like to thank the clerk and the analyst for doing a lot of scurrying around and getting the information for me. I appreciate that you allowed us some time to deal with your motion in order to make a more reasoned decision on it.

The motion reads,

That the Committee ask the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to release to the Committee the information requested by the Parliamentary Budget Officer on the cuts in her department.

That's the substance of the motion.

The motion itself does not relate to the supplementary estimates (B). Those are not the main estimates, which cover a whole wide range of areas. It doesn't deal with the mains. It specifically deals with things that are added to them, and in this particular case, the requirements for an increase in funding.

The other place it could fall into would be the departmental performance report. The departmental performance report deals with the period of time that ends on March 31, 2012. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's request for information flows from budget 2012, but it commences on April 1, 2012, so it is not within this area. For that reason, I would rule that the motion as put forward is out of order. That's my ruling.

Go ahead, Monsieur Lapointe.

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: The motion concerns the cuts made at the department directly within the committee's mandate. Cuts were made in supplementary estimates (B). Your government routinely boasts about its—

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Lapointe, I've made my ruling. I've indicated that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's request related to a period past the departmental performance report and therefore the motion is out of order. I won't have that debate.

Let's go on, then, to vote on the supplementary estimates (B), which is what we need to do.

Shall vote 1b carry?

All those in favour?

Go ahead, Ms. Leitch.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: May I just ask you to repeat the question, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: We're voting on supplementary estimates (B), 2012-13, and vote 1b relates to requests for funding of various kinds that are outlined in the supplementary estimates, six or seven or eight categories.

Shall vote 1b carry?

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Department

Vote 1b—Operating expenditures.....\$22,460,861

(Vote 1b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall vote 5b carry?

Vote 5b—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$92,232,118

(Vote 5b agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes in the supplementary estimates (B), 2012-13, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We've got that done. Is there anything else we need to do?

We will now move in camera to deal with some committee business.

We'll suspend for a few moments for that to happen.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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