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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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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): Good morning. I'd like to welcome everyone here. I appreciate having our representatives here this morning.

We have Mr. Robert Blakely, director of Canadian affairs from the Building and Construction Trades Department.

We have Mr. Claude Bégin, research advisor from the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. We will start with you.

We also have with us today, from the Canadian Labour Congress, John Hugh Edwards, the national representative and senior researcher.

We also have Amy Huziak, the national young workers representative. She knows actually where Saskatoon, Saskatchewan is, as well as Cudworth and Wakaw, the place where I was born and raised. It's kind of good to have a prairie lady here with us this morning. I'm looking forward to hearing what you have to say.

We'll start with Mr. Bégin.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bégin (Research Advisor, Labour Relations Services, Confédération des syndicats nationaux): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to be here on behalf of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and present concerns and perspectives regarding young Canadians in the labour market, and those who are just joining the labour market.

I would first like to tell you about our organization. The Confédération des syndicats nationaux is a labour organization bringing together about 2,000 unions representing nearly 300,000 members. Our members are mainly from Quebec and are grouped based on industry and region. The CSN is working to build a society that is cohesive, democratic, fair and sustainable. It takes part in a number of debates happening in Canadian society.

As a member of the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail and of various roundtables on ongoing on-the-job training, I am pleased to share with you our view of how to integrate young Canadians into the labour market.

In this context of an aging population and fluctuating economy, young people can be the answer to an industrial sector facing labour shortages. However, increasing the promotion of trades among young people still in school increases the risk that they will drop out.

In industries looking for permanent staff, a number of businesses lower their hiring criteria, which encourages young people not to complete their general education. They are more interested in making money in the short term than in graduating.

Unfortunately, this very often confines these young people to their first job. Because they did not finish their basic education, they have a hard time finding another job, even within their own trade.

I am not saying that I am against workplace apprenticeship programs. I want to show that we need a better framework for these programs to ensure that the process will lead students to graduate. In order to develop a competent and flexible labour force, we need firm commitments, both from young people to complete their schooling and from employers to make it easier for their young apprentices to go to school.

While some industrial sectors may be facing a skills shortage, all sectors need to renew their workforces. We need to really inform our young people about employment opportunities in growing economic sectors without setting aside their aspirations.

We must be careful of interventionist strategies directing young people towards jobs that meet the pressing needs of certain industries. A good example of this is the mining sector, where there is great fluctuation in labour needs.

To allow young Canadians to make the right choices for their futures, we have to show them the conditions in the skilled trades they are thinking of going into as realistically and as early as possible. This can be done through introduction to trades programs or through internships in the workplace starting in the first years of their studies.

I met a teenager who did a three-year program to become a licenced practical nurse because she was almost guaranteed a job. During her last year in her program, she had to do an internship in a hospital to complete her training. During this internship, she realized that she was emotionally unable to work in that kind of environment. She gave up her training and went into another trade.

I am giving you this example to illustrate the fact that young people's potential in school and their aspirations do not necessarily correspond to labour market needs. It is important to initiate young people as early as possible to the real environment in the trade they want to choose.

Still, apprenticeship programs are important tools to integrate young people into the workforce properly. If we want more young people to participate in apprenticeship programs through the apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant, we believe financial incentive measures are important. In particular, these grants should be made non-taxable and training measures for young people on employment insurance should be created and improved.

We must use these periods of economic downturn and layoffs to give Canadian workers, especially young people, the opportunity to complete or update their general education and to reorient their careers towards growing employment sectors.

If these approaches are to be truly effective, they have to be incentive and not coercive measures.

• (0855)

Regarding the red seal program, Quebec is really lagging behind. Quebec is generally behind in terms of on-the-job training. While there are 57 professional standards in Quebec, only 7,765 workers out of a pool of targeted workers, or 2%, obtained professional certification.

In addition, workers who want to obtain a red seal must pay \$106 to take the exam. Why spend money to get a certification that brings nothing more than greater interprovincial mobility? The workers who are most interested in interprovincial mobility are young Canadians, as shown in the 2011 annual report of the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship. The average age of new apprentices in 2009 was 24.

If we want to increase the number of workers with red seals, the exam costs should be covered entirely by the red seal program. The program could also include a mechanism for workers to obtain their red seal when they are certified under a provincial standard. For example, young apprentices getting a passing mark of 70% would obtain their red seal.

Going beyond this designation, we have to ensure that young Canadians participating in apprenticeship programs in skilled trades acquire the basic skills they need to continue their training throughout their lives.

If we want the young people of today to become the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, we have to give them the tools to do so.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Monsieur Bégin.

We will now hear from the building and construction trades. Mr. Blakely, go ahead.

Mr. Robert Blakely (Director, Canadian Affairs, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In my time I'm going to try to go to the roots of things that we think really matter. I know you've heard from the brains of the apprenticeship system in the last couple of hearings. I'm going to try to represent what the brawn has to say about some of these things.

In the interest of disclosure, I have several university degrees. I knew what the frogs were saying in Euripides' play, "brekekekex koax koax". One gave me an appreciation for the sweep and majesty of the law. One indicated that I knew how to run a small war.

I've got three journeyman certificates as a plumber, a gas fitter, and a steamfitter. When I'm asked what's the difference between them... My degrees gave me an education. My tickets were something by which through education, training, a course in humility, which I need frequently, I was able to actually do something.

With a Red Seal certificate, I can practise anywhere in Canada. With a Red Seal certificate, if I wanted to go to some other country people accept it at face value. Our system is probably the best worker training system—the apprenticeship system I am referring to here—in the world. Some 60% of Canada's apprentices are in our industry, construction. We support that system unreservedly, but there are ways to make it better.

There are four basic premises that you should view my remarks under.

First, there is no national apprenticeship system in Canada. There is a hodgepodge of 13 sometimes squalling, sometimes cooperating, provincial and territorial entities.

Second, and in the material we filed with you it's in bold upper case, you need a job to be an apprentice. You cannot go to school and say, "I would like to be an apprentice, may I take some training?" You need a job.

Third, getting people into jobs is one of the most important leadership things that the Government of Canada can do at this time. Currently, there are not enough skilled, trained employees to do the work here in Canada.

Fourth, there are not enough employers who do training. The Government of Canada needs to show leadership in this field.

First is dealing with the value of the skilled trades. The truth is there are no television programs that show Bob the plumber or Jack the electrician as smart people. The best we get on television is Schneider, the guy with the tool belt and the cigarette package rolled up who is always leering and doing whatever. People think if you went to university you're a winner. If you went to a trade school you are one of life's losers.

It's borne out by a lot of statistics of the number of people who start in a university and either get a degree and can't get a job or quit and go into the apprenticeship system. The average age for a completer is 31. The average age for an apprentice, depending on the province you're in, goes from 24 to 28. People are coming to the trades too late.

The Government of Canada needs to get in front of the 13 squalling and sometimes bickering jurisdictions, and you have the power of the purse to do that. Apprenticeship, in the main, is funded by the labour market development agreements, LMDAs. You need to put some conditions on those LMDAs.

Condition A is that the provinces actually get some results and train people. Then it's that people don't just get some training, that they actually go through and complete, because a lack of completions is one of the problems we have in the system. And there's making people accountable and making people understand the value of a mobile workforce in this country, which undertakes I think, on the books, \$600 billion worth of industrial projects.

It means that the workforce that is extant today in Cape Breton, in Ontario, in British Columbia, or in Alberta will not be able to do it. We need people to be mobile in the country. That means reducing barriers and creating standards.

● (0900)

It means things like the Red Seal program, which I know you have been spoken to about.

It is about finding a way to make our workforce mobile. Today, a significant number of workers from Cape Breton are working in Saskatchewan or Alberta. In a lot of cases, they're travelling on their own dime. I've made this argument to your committee before, and your committee actually made some recommendations to say that there ought to be a mobility grant for people who undertake temporary work and keep their communities going at home.

There needs to be leadership on the mobility of training. An apprentice who starts a trade in Cape Breton should be able to complete it in Alberta. Someone who starts in Alberta and gets part of their hours in Saskatchewan should be able to make things work that way as well. It means a common core curriculum and common sequencing, which needs to be done.

The Government of Canada only hires a few apprentices, and those are in Her Majesty's Canadian Dockyards on either coast. You hire apprentices because we're the unions there and we make you hire them.

The Government of Canada is one of the largest purchasers of construction in the country, but you do not insist on anyone doing training to get your contract. Your tender evaluation doesn't fold in safety, quality, and training. A number of large industrial concerns across the country, such as Shell, Syncrude, Suncor, and Vale on the east coast, have programs where they build right into their commercial terms on their tender documents the requirement to have a training plan and to produce a certain number of trainees, learners, and apprentices on the job.

The Red Seal program took a hit when the mobility instrument became the provincial certificate of qualification. The Red Seal is important, and it needs to be reinforced. In my material, I have a bunch of stuff on that. I'm not going to take too much time on it.

Most importantly about the Red Seal, we get temporary foreign workers who come to this country. If they're in a compulsory trade, they have to get a Red Seal. If they're in a compulsory trade and get a Red Seal, under the vastly improved skills and education grid under the bill on changes to the Immigration Act that is currently pending, a journeyman's certificate will count for the same as a bachelor's degree. We will get permanent residents in the skilled trades.

The Canadian experience class and the provincial nominee programs need to be strengthened. We need to invest in a transition

program: a transition from "I haven't got a job" or "I've got a crappy job" to a real job.

There's the Hammer Heads program in Toronto, which the Central Ontario Building Trades funds out of its own money. There's a program in Cape Breton that the trades fund out of their own money. There's the Trade Winds To Success program in Alberta, for aboriginal people, which the trades fund out of their own money. There is the diversity program in Newfoundland, which the trades fund out of their own money. There's Helmets to Hardhats—we thank you for \$150,000 in federal money—which we're funding out of our own industry money.

We train them in the 300-odd schools we have across the country. We have an infrastructure of about \$650 million and we deliver \$250 million worth of training every year. We do it out of our own money.

Help with equipment would make more capacity. More capacity means more training. More training will mean more completions.

When a project is mooted and the National Energy Board considers it...we supported the change to the regulations that Minister Oliver brought forward. If someone wants to have a multi-billion dollar pipeline or a multi-billion dollar this or that built, say to them, "You may build your pipeline, but you will have a training component where you will insist and ensure that a percentage of apprentices are trained on your job."

A billion dollars' worth of construction is five million to six million work hours. If 20% of those hours were on apprentices, we'd start training a lot of them. Remember, we have \$600 billion worth of heavy construction industrial work to come, plus all the other work that goes on.

Create a voucher system, whereby an apprentice can choose what institution he goes to and can take his per-seat cost with him.

● (0905)

We have talked about PLAR until we are blue in the face. That's the prior learning assessment program. Set up one that works, instead of having 13 centres of excellence across the country that are incapable of actually determining what someone's qualifications should be.

Are you giving me the high sign, Mr. Chair?

● (0910)

The Chair: Yes, I am. You're going over time. It's interesting, but....

Go ahead.

Mr. Robert Blakely: In terms of the shipbuilding program on either coast, make sure apprentices are there.

I'll wrap up. I have only a couple of things to go.

Concerning supports to the learner, you can't get a student loan if you're an apprentice, because your program is for eight weeks, not twelve. The profile of our people is that they have kids, they have families, and they have responsibilities. They need some dough. For Pete's sake, it isn't a lot of money.

In regard to EI, pre-approve them. Make sure they get the money when they're there. Prior testimony indicates that the number one complaint is not getting EI money.

Concerning the apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant, double them. Make them available for all years of apprenticeship and for second trades. The cost for all federal supports to apprenticeship is \$89 million. Even if you doubled that, it's a value. The cost of the grants is about \$8 million. Another eight million bucks would get us more completers. We need completers.

Thank you very much for your attention and for letting me go over my time.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You had some interesting comments and suggestions for the committee to consider.

We'll now go to the Canadian Labour Congress. I understand Amy Huziak will be presenting.

Ms. Amy Huziak (National Young Workers Representative, Canadian Labour Congress): Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the 3.3 million members of the Canadian Labour Congress, I want to thank you for the invitation to comment on issues related to the economic opportunities for young apprentices.

Before beginning to address economic opportunities for young apprentices, allow me to make some comments about the current situation for young workers in general. As the members of this committee would be aware, young workers were among the hardest hit segment of the labour market in the last recession, and the labour market prospects for young people continue to deteriorate. In September 2012, there were 173,000 fewer full-time jobs for youth aged 15 to 24 than there were back in September 2007.

The employment rate for youth aged 20 to 24 fell to 66.6% in September 2012, which is five percentage points lower than in September 2008.

All considered, the real unemployment rate for youth, including involuntary part-time and discouraged workers, was 19.6% in September 2012, which is 1.4% higher than last year. Even among young workers who have managed to find employment, conditions have deteriorated. Increasingly, young workers are facing employment that is low wage, precarious, part-time, and temporary, and the path between school and meaningful full-time employment is becoming increasingly non-linear. Education is still one of the greatest factors leading to a successful working career, but with increasing tuition fees and living expenses, post-secondary education has either fallen out of reach for many young people or left them saddled with massive debt that will take years to pay off.

Can you imagine how frustrating it is for young workers who are unemployed or underemployed to hear that Canada has a skills gap, that employers cannot find workers with skills they require? Every day I hear from young workers who would jump at the chance to find well-paid, productive employment and who would willingly enter training for the jobs that are currently not being filled.

One of the hopeful areas for young people seeking employment may well be the apprenticeable trades. Careers in the skilled trades are well paid and productive. Government and employers are suggesting that skilled jobs in the resource sector and in building and

construction will be plentiful in the future. Even in our imperilled manufacturing sector, increased productivity and competitiveness will require a highly skilled workforce. Apprenticeship, which combines on-the-job training, centred on mentoring by skilled tradespeople and classroom education, is a proven and effective method of training skilled workers.

Canada has a well-designed system for interprovincial certification of more than 50 skilled trades. For more than 50 years, the Red Seal certification, which you've already heard about, has provided employers with the assurance that workers holding the Red Seal are qualified to work productively in that trade. It provides workers with a universally recognized credential, which increases their employability and mobility, as workers with a Red Seal can work in any of Canada's 13 jurisdictions.

Employers are crying for skilled workers. Young workers are crying for meaningful work, and we have a universally recognized system of interprovincial certification in the apprenticeship trades. So what is the problem?

There are several barriers we can identify that limit access of young people to the skilled trades.

First are traditional attitudes. It is often assumed that apprenticeship has been a pathway to work used by young people leaving high school and seeking post-secondary training. If this were true, we would expect the average age of people entering apprenticeship would be in the late teens, and this is not true in Canada.

In the late 1990s, the median age for people entering apprenticeships was 27. The latest information we have from 2010 indicates the average age of people registering for apprenticeships in the 10 most popular trades was in fact 30. Clearly, trades training has not been used as a direct pathway between high school and post-secondary training but rather as an option for people who have experience in the labour market already.

Many studies indicate that trades training has not been a first choice option for a vocational guidance system that is biased towards university as the prime destination for high school graduates. There has also been a traditional bias against participation of young women in apprenticeship training. Today is December 6, the national day of remembrance and action on violence against women, which was established to commemorate the 14 young women who were murdered at École Polytechnique for being women studying in a non-traditional field. This gender bias lives on, in that fewer than 10% of skilled tradespeople in Canada are women.

Second is the lack of employer investment. In order to begin and complete an apprenticeship, a young worker needs to find an employer who is willing to hire and train apprentices. It would seem to make sense that employers who are having difficulty finding skilled workers would see training the workers themselves through apprenticeships as a viable option. The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum has confirmed there's a positive return on investment in training for employers. Unfortunately, many employers do not hire apprentices and seem to prefer hiring fully qualified tradespeople who have been trained under the auspices of other employers.

● (0915)

Third is the lack of government commitment to apprenticeship. In recent years, government has provided incentives for hiring apprentices through employer tax credits and grants to apprenticeship in mid-training and completion. While these incentives are positive, they are not adequate. To meet the needs of employers for skilled workers, and the needs of young people to find satisfying, productive employment, we require a national strategy to put all the pieces together.

Central to this strategy should be the recognition that apprenticeship provides a proven, successful bridge between the worlds of formal education, vocational training, and work.

The strategy should include, first, engaging employers, workers, and unions to work with government to design and evaluate a national strategy for the development of apprenticeship opportunities. Currently, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum provides a venue for this kind of discussion.

Second, we need measures to increase the profile of apprenticeship as a significant and viable post-secondary option for all young people, including young women, minorities, and other under-represented groups.

Third, we need to maintain high standards of training, remuneration, and safety. We know that skills training is a key component to increasing the productivity and competitiveness of our economy. Our future is not in a race to the bottom, but rather it is in the creation of a high productivity and high wage economy.

We know that many employers recognize the importance of addressing these issues. I can ensure you that the Canadian labour movement is also ready and willing to work to build our economy and to play its part in the creation of useful, productive jobs for young people.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those presentations.

We'll now move to rounds of questioning, alternating between parties.

We'll start with Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

It's good to hear that there are unions out there trying to create these apprenticeship systems as strongly as you are. The government has not done very well in assisting in creating these apprenticeships over the years. It has spent billions of dollars in infrastructure money

and, as far as I know, very few of those dollars had targeted apprenticeships in them.

More recently, with some federal money, but mostly provincial money, Metrolinx in Ontario is spending close to \$10 billion on rail infrastructure projects in the city of Toronto and is refusing to create apprenticeships through the Hammer Heads program. It has come up with various excuses, mostly to do with the fact that it just doesn't want to be bothered with it.

Is there a role for governments to play in insisting that there are apprenticeships attached to the spending that those governments do?

Mr. Robert Blakely: I think the short answer to that is, yes, there is a government role.

Companies like Shell and Syncrude aren't charities. They understand fully that if they are going to be able to develop the sorts of facilities they need, they need a follow-on workforce. They've done the demographic modelling. They've looked at the numbers. They've taken the construction sector council numbers, the mining sector council numbers, the petroleum sector council numbers, and the electrical sector council numbers and had comparisons done of their own privately, and understand that skilled people are at a minimum.

Do you insist on having apprenticeships? They do. They find that it's productive. The study done by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, which says \$1.00 spent on an apprentice has \$1.47 return, seems to bear that out.

I speak as someone who's worked as an apprentice. Two people are working together; if one is making \$40 an hour and one is making \$20 an hour, the blended wage rate is \$30 an hour. If two guys are working at \$40 an hour, the blended rate is \$80 an hour. A number of people have seen this. The school of thought that says it's too much trouble for us to bother with this is just a cop-out, respectfully.

● (0920)

Mr. John Hugh Edwards (National Representative and Senior Researcher, Canadian Labour Congress): Mr. Chairman, I could add to Brother Blakely's comments. The idea of governments' participating in the apprenticeship system is not theoretical; it's practical. Bob would agree that there are, in fact, agreements being signed now between governments and industry across the country that are including in them benchmarks for training.

Newfoundland and Labrador is the example that comes to my mind, where agreements signed between the petroleum industry and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador include offsets for training and benchmarks that need to be hit in hiring apprentices.

Mr. Robert Blakely: The labour agreement from Nalcor has that in it.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: You talked about the unions spending, I think, \$250 million a year in training.

Mr. Robert Blakely: Yes.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Will that money be as available if Bill C-377 passes? Will there be as much?

Mr. Robert Blakely: No, training funds are still in the bill. The truth is that Bill C-377 solves a problem that doesn't exist. Will we be affected in training? Yes.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: It will reduce your ability.

Mr. Robert Blakely: It will reduce the amount of money available, because we only get so much out of a collective agreement.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: I have one other thing: the federal government's response to the lack of skilled trades has been to allow employers to hire temporary foreign workers at a 15% discount. If that's going to be the...

The Chair: Mr. Sullivan, hold on a moment.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a point of order, just to correct the record. That is actually not what the legislation states.

The Chair: That's not a point of order. I don't think it's particularly helpful, because I'm not sure those are accepted facts. Carry on.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: There is provision in regulations, not in legislation, that suggests that employers who need temporary foreign workers can hire them and pay them 15% less than the going rate in Canada. I'm not sure if that applies to all of them. But it doesn't seem to be helpful if the result is that we have less incentive for employers to employ apprentices. Would you agree?

The Chair: You can respond. Your time is up. I'm not sure that's a fact. As the chair, I don't think that's correct. In any event, you can respond.

Mr. Robert Blakely: I know we need temporary foreign workers. We have them in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario. We need them. If they work under our collective agreements, they get exactly the same money that a Canadian gets. That's the deal, and that's the deal we tried to get the LMOs under. I can't speak to other entities and how they're doing it.

The one thing I would say is this: if you're going to sell young people on careers in construction or in the skilled trades, there needs to be a monetary reward for standing on the high line in Fort McMurray at 40 below and thinking you'd rather be any other place in the world but there. But if you know you're going to make \$150,000 this year, you'll get that flange tightened up and think about getting somewhere where you're not going to die.

• (0925)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Butt, go ahead.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to all of you for being here. I enjoyed all the presentations.

Mr. Blakely, you mentioned that in your view we really have 13 different apprenticeship programs operating across the country, one for each province and territory. You referred to the labour market development agreements. Do you have any specific recommendations that the federal government could include as we renegotiate

these agreements with the provinces to make sure that we have some national standards? You mentioned this, but I'm not sure you came up with anything specific. Do you have any specific suggestions on what we could include?

Mr. Robert Blakely: I do. We might require that there will be certain number of people who actually graduate from the system. We could require that they graduate in a Red Seal trade. We could cooperate in creating more Red Seal trades. We need more of them, not fewer. In areas where there is some confusion in the apprenticeship system, make giving them money conditional on participation in efforts such as these. The directors of apprenticeship know where the problems are. Put them in a room and deprive them of food and water for a half a day, and they can solve a lot of problems. A lot of the problems come up because there is a political interface between the federal government and the provincial governments. The bureaucrats frequently know what the problems are, so impose some conditions. We have a shopping list of conditions we think would be useful. I'll send them to you and the committee.

Mr. Brad Butt: That would be great. This is the kind of thing we're looking for in our study, to come up with some things that are

John Hugh, do you want to add something?

Mr. John Hugh Edwards: Yes.

To add to that, Bob mentioned earlier that we can make some clear, direct recommendations in terms of the apprenticeship system. Just so we're clear on this, the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship manages the Red Seal. These are directors of apprenticeship, or whatever their title is in the various provinces and territories.

Mr. Robert Blakely: The feds manage it. The CCDA is in partnership with them.

Mr. John Hugh Edwards: They're funded by the federal government of course and the minister, secretariat-wise.

As Bob says, that group getting together should be able to improve the system in significant ways. For example, Bob had mentioned earlier the idea of common core curriculum across the jurisdictions. Common core curriculum seems like a very simple idea. This is what the apprentices are studying in the various jurisdictions across the country, and it's roughly the same: the common core of that curriculum. That means if an apprentice in the midst of his or her training moves from Nova Scotia to British Columbia halfway through an apprenticeship, he or she can pick up the apprenticeship there; it's the same training and it's on the same schedule. These are simple things, to repeat what Bob is saying. They can be done.

Another key recommendation that we would have is that it's the kind of thing that can be tied directly to funding that comes out of the federal government through the labour market development agreements for training, which are formally part of part 2 of the EI program, the support measures. When we're looking at that kind of funding coming out of the federal government, we think that ties on that money to the provinces and territories are appropriate, for example, the development of common core curriculum.

Just quickly, Mr. Chair, another one is that we're very keen on developing the Red Seal trades and, as Bob said, increasing their number. We're also very keen on making sure that those trades aren't fragmented. For example, in the province of British Columbia, a program was developed for framers, part of a carpenter's trade of framing houses. It wasn't very successful in terms of the entrants coming into the program or the response of industry to it. In fact, I've talked to several general contractors in British Columbia, employers who say they don't want people who only have part of a trade, they want people with a full trade. The general contractor wants a full Red Seal carpenter because he doesn't know exactly what he's going to be bidding on next week or next month. We're very concerned that programs will develop what's called boutique trades or fragmented general trades, and that's another thing we think can be tied directly to funding through the federal government.

• (0930)

The Chair: Does anybody else wish to comment? No.

We'll move to Mr. Lapointe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by making sure I understand two issues. And then, I'd like to hear your comments, if possible, on these two points.

On the one hand, far too many youth are unemployed. On the other, there is a glaring shortage of human resources in the skilled trades. Both of these things are occurring. It makes no sense, but it is a fact.

Take a 20-year-old young man. It may cost us \$10,000 to train him for a skilled trade. Based on my experience in my region, in real terms, that would be a young person who is living rather precariously, earning between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year, and who could earn something like \$45,000 to \$50,000 a year thanks to this training, ending up in a less precarious situation.

In this example, his company, within a year or two, is wealthier in human resources; a Canadian citizen is wealthier, financially, within a matter of one year; the consolidated revenue fund is also wealthier because within three years' time, the taxes paid by this young person would have amply covered the initial \$10,000 investment.

Mr. Blakely was saying that we could do twice as much as what we are doing today and that it would still be worthwhile financially. That is what I believe I understood from his testimony.

Why not use the means at our disposal to do this? Even if the government were to provide 80% of this \$10,000 amount, it could pay off. Why do you believe this isn't being done?

The second aspect of my questions has to do with Mr. Bégin's comments. It is in the same vein as my first idea and is, to my mind, crucial.

We can do all of this but we need to also make sure that we respond to another issue: skilled trades are not perceived as an impressive occupation from a social standpoint nor as a valuable social occupation.

If we are to consider Mr. Bégin's suggestions, I think we need to make sure there is good follow-up in the context of training. We should make sure that people make the right career choices, not just choosing a profession willy-nilly, thinking it will bring in a lot of money in six months' time.

There should be some type of ongoing training. People should associate skilled trades with the fact of being a brilliant individual rather than some kind of second-class citizen who never made it to university. That notion will fall by the wayside in a few years' time.

Are my observations valid? I would like to hear your comments on those two aspects, please.

Mr. Claude Bégin: I'll give you my perception of the situation in Quebec. For years now, university training was extremely prized, so in the minds of young people, going to university was essential. There was a move away from skilled trades, which nevertheless remain essential in our economy. So, we need to reverse this trend. We need to value trades and promote them.

There is another issue in Quebec, which is actually a problem: not only do we need to train people in skilled trades, but that training needs to be recognized in the form of a diploma. Training is being done in major corporations, but it is not recognized. There is a lack of recognition.

Businesses and business people maintain this major myth. They believe that if they give recognition to business-based training, they will either lose their employee or be faced with pressure from employees to increase wages. Well, this is a myth.

Recent studies have shown the opposite. Training and recognizing training, in the workplace and in terms of the training actually provided, makes employees more faithful to their employer. In exchange, companies get to keep them on staff for several years.

So we need to dispel these myths. We must value on-the-job training and support these people. The goal should also be the granting of a diploma and recognition.

It can be done.

Mr. François Lapointe: Regarding the other aspect of my concerns, should we make the investments that need to be made to get the results we want?

Mr. Claude Bégin: Yes indeed, we need to invest both money and resources. Businesses need the money.

[*English*]

The Chair: Wait just a moment, if you could.

Your time is coming to a close, and you want to hear from Mr. Blakely.

Mr. Bégin, if you could give a short response, then we will hear from Mr. Blakely. I don't think you had concluded.

● (0935)

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bégin: Again, the reality in Quebec is that close to 75% of companies are SMEs. They do not have the financial resources they need to provide training. So there needs to be clear support from the various levels of government to support them in this training. If they have the resources and the grants, they will do the training.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Blakely, go ahead.

Mr. Robert Blakely: In terms of apprenticeships and how we get people into them, 80% of the apprentices in Canada are produced by 17% of the employers. In my local of the plumbers and pipefitters in Edmonton, we have 11,000 members. We have 2,000 apprentices. When you take the retired guys out of the equation, it's about 25% apprentices. That's all we can manage. We have a list that would go around the room twice of people who would like to get into one of the pipe trades. People need to have a job. You only get a job if the employer can put you to work. If the employer can put you to work, you have a chance to be an apprentice and to have a career. The Government of Canada needs to lead from out front by saying, "Do training on my job." You won't have to spend \$10,000. You will have somebody earning and learning.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blakely.

We will now move to Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, witnesses, for being here today.

All three of you mention mobility, in slightly different contexts, as being one of the larger issues here. It resonates with me as someone who owned a construction company for 25 years and was also president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association in the mid-1990s, because the mobility barrier is actually between provinces. For example, right here in Ottawa with Quebec next door, an Ottawa contractor is not allowed to go work in Quebec, yet the reverse is allowed. A Quebec contractor can come into Ottawa and work but Quebec does not allow anyone from outside the province. I often use the example of an electrical company here in Ottawa that employs some 200 people. It wants to bid on contracts in Quebec but it cannot do that. That's one mobility problem that needs to be solved within the industry itself, because Quebec has rules regarding closing out other people and contractors.

The other mobility problem is, as you have articulated, the transferability of training from one province to another. I can tell you about many good employees who come from other parts of the country into companies in Ontario and actually have to start all over again, even if they are partway through. I believe we need a very pragmatic solution to that problem as well.

Ms. Huziak, you mentioned that young people are ready and willing, and they want to get involved. Are they mobile? Will they go to parts of the country where they can get out of whatever form of transportation they have taken and have a job within the first two days of being there? There are parts of the country where that can happen.

Ms. Amy Huziak: Maybe I can briefly comment, and then John can add.

I believe that many young people are willing and able to move around the country, some more than others, of course. There are some young people who have families or other commitments for whom that would be very difficult.

Mr. John Hugh Edwards: The question becomes what kind of support we provide, as Bob was suggesting earlier, in terms of that mobility.

I can tell you, as someone from Cape Breton who travels there regularly—and Roger would agree—there's an Air Canada flight that leaves Halifax, comes down in Ottawa, and then goes to Calgary. And in reverse, there's a flight that takes off from Edmonton, lands in Ottawa, and goes on to Halifax. Those flights are full of people who are working largely in the building and construction trades and in the oil patch out west in Saskatchewan or Alberta. They are travelling regularly—commuting is the right way to put it—on a several-thousand-mile commute to work on a regular basis. Canadian workers, generally, for generations, have been ready and willing to move. They need the ability to do that.

Bob says, and at the Canadian Labour Congress we say, that the Red Seal program we have is one of the best programs in the world for that. One of the things it does is provide that labour mobility. A worker with a Red Seal in his or her back pocket can go to work anywhere in the country, if the person can get there.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I would relate a few examples, in my own community, of young people who have made that trip to the west and have landed work immediately. In fact, if they're interested in getting into apprenticeships and trades, they're automatically streamed that way. They may be taking unskilled or semi-skilled work and have not had that desire.

I would challenge young people right across the country. We travelled out west. We listened to the large corporations and the small business owners, etc., and they're crying for people. They're crying for young people who just want to work. They're crying for them. There are jobs immediately available for them.

You cited numbers about the fact that they are unemployed and that it's getting worse for them. You're painting a canvas here that all of a sudden things are dire in their lives across Canada. It isn't the case. The case is that there's lots of work. It depends on how mobile you will make yourself to seek it out as an individual and take responsibility to do that in your life. I just make that point. There are parts and pockets of this country where they are absolutely crying for workers.

I'd like to ask Mr. Blakely a question. I think you did a great job giving us some very pragmatic suggestions. I don't know whether you addressed, in your opinion, what the real barriers are to apprenticeship. A huge percentage of people don't complete. When I say barriers, I mean the practical reasons, in your mind, people aren't completing. I'd like to hear those.

● (0940)

The Chair: Your time is up, but go ahead and respond to that.

Mr. Robert Blakely: The first is that in the voluntary certification trades, you don't have to actually complete to be one. You have to have the licence to be a plumber or an electrician, so people complete.

Second, trades aren't sexy. Third, people can't find jobs and don't know where the jobs are. The guy who has basic and intermediate carpentry in Ontario goes to Alberta, and somebody says that he has to start at the bottom. He says, "Hey, kiss my...pal", and does something else. We have lost the sunk cost in him.

We need to mobilize training, make training move, and rip down the interprovincial barriers.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll move to Mr. Cuzner to conclude.

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

You made three references to Cape Breton in your testimony, Mr. Blakely. You have a Cape Bretoner sitting on the end, so it's a pretty good morning for the island.

Ms. Huziak, I want to commend you and recognize your reference to women training in non-traditional trades. You looped it in with the tragedy that took place 24 years ago. It was poignant. I just wanted to recognize that.

Mr. Bégin and Mr. Blakely, both of you made reference to the disconnect between the training and the interruption as one of the barriers to completing a trades training program, an apprenticeship. That's EI and the extended period of time, which has grown over the last number of years, for processing that first EI cheque. Could you just make a comment on that, Mr. Bégin, and then Mr. Blakely?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bégin: Indeed, I would say that right from the start, before a company proceeds to layoffs, it should have an opportunity to keep its employees and train them.

I think this is where employment insurance could come into play. We could have job-sharing. We should be able to reduce working hours and allow for EI to compensate for reduced hours of work due to training.

I think it is a tool, an important lever that employment insurance would give to companies. It would allow workers to remain with a company, to get access to resources, to complete their training or to learn new skills, all with the support of employment insurance.

There would no longer be a waiting period. The program could be far greater in scope than it actually is when it comes to job-sharing or time-sharing.

Allow me to digress, but it would seem to me that we are forgetting about an important segment of the population. A great deal is said about youth, but I think we are often forgetting about aboriginal youth. There should be specific programs to help them enter the labour market. They are ready to work. However, given their context, we need to make a special effort to support them. This is a source of young Canadians that need to get involved in the Canadian economy.

Thank you.

• (0945)

[English]

Mr. Robert Blakely: On the EI question, one of my sons went to trade school and he was a welder. My daughter went to a number of universities and is now a quality control technician, so she's an apprentice too. They go to training, and they get their cheques. After training's done, they rely on the Bank of Dad to pay their bills. Why can't we pre-approve people who are going to take training? I think Mr. Sharpe and someone else who spoke to you said the EI problem was the number one anecdotal problem for people taking training. Let's eliminate that problem. Get them pre-approved.

Speaking of young aboriginal people, Mr. Bégin, you know in Alberta we had a program that was shared by the federal government, the provincial government, and industry, called Trade Winds To Success. We put nearly 600 aboriginal kids through it and had a 95% success rate, putting them into trades jobs where they're working their way through. The federal government withdrew its funding. We found a way to fund it through the trades. But if you're going to be successful with aboriginal kids, they need to get a start. They need to understand they're not going to a place like Algonquin College, with 87 million people in it. When they come from a small community, they need to understand that they've got some supports, that they can get some support from elders and from an institution that cares more about them as a person than as a number. If we don't do that, young aboriginal people are going to get left behind.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Does CLC want to make a comment on the EI issue?

Mr. John Hugh Edwards: We're absolutely in agreement with the building trades on this one. Of course, pre-approval is required for EI. What we're looking at—I think everybody at this table understands—is a process of apprenticeship that is on-the-job training interspersed with time in the classroom. In those classroom periods, the apprentices need support. We know what the schedule looks like; we know when they will be off the job site and into the classroom. This is set out in the terms and conditions of the apprenticeship. So a pre-approval of EI would seem to be a simple thing to handle in the system.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Chair, how are we doing for time?

The Chair: Your time is up. Those were some good questions, and good answers.

We appreciate having the panel present. You've got some very good ideas and suggestions. We'll certainly take them into consideration.

We'll suspend for five minutes so we can install the second panel.

Mr. Robert Blakely: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0955)

[Public proceedings resume]

The Chair: If we can start shortly, I'd appreciate it. We'll call the meeting to order.

We have a new panel with us today. For the Council of Deans of Trades and Apprenticeship Canada, we have Henry Reiser, director, Yukon and British Columbia; and dean, faculty of trades and technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University. We'll hear from you first.

Then we have with us Nobina Robinson, chief executive officer, Polytechnics Canada, along with the director, Ken Doyle, and we'll be hearing from you.

We also have with us Anna Toneguzzo, from government relations and policy research of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, who will present.

We've added to our panel representatives from the Mohawk College. They weren't on our panel, but they've travelled a distance to be here and so we'll certainly welcome and hear from Ali Ghiassi and Piero Cherubini.

I see we've moved the order a bit. Why don't we present in the way everybody is seated? We'll start with Mohawk College. They weren't scheduled to be here. We will obviously shorten our questioning and we may not get to the last round, but I thought it was appropriate that we do this.

I've spoken to Mr. Cuzner, who graciously agreed to give up his round if necessary to make sure that happened.

Mr. Ali Ghiassi (Vice-President and General Counsel, Public Affairs, Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the committee for your indulgence this morning.

My name is Ali Ghiassi. I'm here today with my colleague, Piero Cherubini.

I will be providing you with some introductory remarks about Mohawk College and the strategic direction that we're moving towards, and then I will turn it over to Mr. Cherubini, who will talk about some of the great things we're doing to address skills shortages in the communities that we serve.

Mohawk College is a large college in Ontario, with approximately 13,000 full-time students and 5,000 apprentices, with two campuses in Hamilton, one in Brantford, and another in Stoney Creek, Ontario. We provide primarily certificate and diploma programs in a wide variety of areas including business, engineering technology, health sciences, community and urban studies, media and entertainment, and skilled trades and apprenticeship.

The essence of Mohawk's vision is the notion that our graduates are future-ready. Our commitment to give our students the skills they will require to successfully meet the challenges of the 21st century global economy is something we take very seriously. We work very closely with our industry partners to ensure that our graduates have the skills necessary to be employable from day one, and our efforts are paying off. For two years running now, our students have ranked Mohawk the number one rated Ontario college in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

As a provincial crown agency, Mohawk College is regulated by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. In a recent submission to the ministry about the future strategic direction of Mohawk, we proposed an institutional mandate that will focus the college into areas of health, technology, and applied research. At Mohawk, we are proposing to lead in regionalization by creating a centre of excellence. We would like to become Ontario's first specialized institute for health and technology. Both areas are key drivers of our regional economy and long-standing strengths of our college.

We have an impressive track record of working with the federal government in the areas of applied research and commercialization, and we hope the government will continue to support us in the pursuit of our mandate.

Now I would like to turn it over to my colleague, Mr. Cherubini.

• (1000)

Mr. Piero Cherubini (Dean, Business, Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship, Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology): Good morning.

As Ali mentioned, one of Mohawk's strengths is in its delivery of technology, skilled trades, and apprenticeship programs. In the year 2000, Mohawk developed and still delivers a two-year technician program, in which we integrated the apprenticeship program so that students, upon graduation, have completed their two-year technician diploma and completed all levels of the apprenticeship program. During their co-op placement we register these students as apprentices, so upon graduation they have completed an additional 16 months towards their apprenticeship certification.

We started working on this program in the late 1990s and launched it in 2000, because industry told us that grade 12 graduates were no longer prepared to handle the new technology they were going to face in the workplace. We heard clearly that the days of hiring grade 12 graduates to start a traditional apprenticeship program were gone, and that the employers in this sector needed people who could hit the ground running, so to speak, with advanced skills that could not be delivered as part of an existing high school program. As part of this pilot, we established a community-based committee made up of employers, union associations, and our college. This committee actually became the sponsoring agent to register the students as apprentices while they were out on their co-op placements.

What a great win-win this is for both the student and the employer. The employer has the opportunity to see the student in a co-op placement before making a full-time job offer, and the graduate has skills far in advance of those of a high school graduate who would be starting a career as an apprentice.

Another advantage to the employer and the apprentice is that once the apprentices are hired full-time, they no longer have to leave the workplace for the traditional eight or ten weeks of block training.

If we are considering other advantages, we can keep in mind that the traditional eight-week blocks of apprenticeship training continue to be supported by the federal government by way of EI payments and other supports for the apprentice while they're in school. In this model, the graduates have completed all the in-school training, so they will not have to leave the workplace to attend further academic training, and therefore EI support for the traditional apprenticeship program is eliminated.

We believe this model can be replicated across the country to help deal with current skills shortages. However, I am suggesting today that we can take this model and extend it to assist those displaced workers and help them re-engage with the workforce and fill some of these high-skilled jobs. We can use existing curriculum from the two-year program and deliver it in an intensive model that might better suit older workers who are seeking rapid re-employment and who may not be in a position to spend over two years in a college setting. We would suggest a compressed 12-month model, without breaks, that would better suit older workers.

At Mohawk, we have a lot of experience dealing with displaced workers. In our experience, if you take some time up front and offer some foundational learning in math and literacy, these students become engaged and high-functioning college graduates. They bring life skills and learning that can be integrated into their learning programs. I believe we can take this community-based committee model to engage employers, market opportunity to displaced workers, and find that match between displaced workers and employers not only in our region and province, but across the country.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation.

We'll now move to Ms. Robinson or Mr. Doyle, however they decide.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nobina Robinson (Chief Executive Officer, Polytechnics Canada): Good day everyone. Thank you very much for having invited us to appear today.

[*English*]

It's very nice to be here again. We were here in March talking about the skills gap, and now we're talking about something even more focused than that.

I'm going to ask Ken Doyle to take over for Polytechnics Canada. I do want to share with the committee good news today, that we now have 10 members at Polytechnics Canada, with the joining of the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. Why is that relevant? Because they are a leader in trades training in Saskatchewan. They have demonstrated their commitment to applied education and to the advanced training of highly qualified skilled people, which is what Polytechnics Canada tries to focus on.

It's my pleasure to introduce Ken Doyle, our director of policy. He has devoted over two years of in-depth study and analysis to the conundrum of apprenticeship completion. I encourage you to listen

to his action-oriented ideas for improving our shortfall in trained trades workers.

● (1005)

Mr. Ken Doyle (Director, Policy, Polytechnics Canada): Good morning.

A recent *New York Times* article by Thomas Friedman explored how welders use math and science every day. For example, they have to use math when computing angles or understanding metallurgy, not to mention when figuring out how different gases, pressures, and temperatures have to be combined. As Friedman states, welding is now a STEM job, that is, a job that requires knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and math. We can all agree that programs targeted at boosting STEM attainment and research excellence in Canada do not consider welders, electricians, or carpenters as their target audience.

The main barrier faced by young apprentices is that parents, guidance counsellors, and government programs do not value the skilled trades the same way they value university and college programs. The federal government can play a leadership role in changing that behaviour, and Canada's colleges and polytechnics stand ready to assist.

I'm here today on behalf of Polytechnics Canada, an association of Canada's 10 leading publicly funded colleges and polytechnics. Last year, over 40,000 apprentice students attended our 10 member institutions. We monitor emerging enrolment and dropout trends, as well as current market wages for both apprentices and journeymen. We develop and deliver innovative instruction methods such as pre-apprenticeship training and dual credential programs. We also deliver online learning and simulated work experience. As soon as an apprentice sets foot on one of our campuses, we consider him a student.

Now, I understand that the committee is studying the barriers faced by young apprentices, of which there are many, but my remarks will also focus on barriers faced by mature apprentices. This is because the average age of entry to apprenticeship is 26 years old. The average time to completion is five and a half years. For carpenters and electricians, it's seven, meaning that if they aren't mature students when they enter their program, they are by the time they complete. Government programs must confront this reality: most people are registering as apprentices as a second or third try at a career.

I would like to focus my remarks on two elements in the committee's study: completion rates and federal apprenticeship-related programs.

While the completion rate is alarmingly low at 50%, and has been for decades, even worse is the actual number of tradespeople being certified every year. Let's compare it to completion in post-secondary education. In total over the last 11 years, Canada has graduated 600,000 students from social and behavioural sciences programs as well as 540,000 students from humanities programs at universities and colleges. Over the same period, Canada has only certified 26,000 plumbers and 15,000 welders. Stated another way, for every 40 students we graduate from the social sciences program, we certify one welder.

This is a serious problem, given the needs of tomorrow's labour market in the economy. The apprenticeship training model requires a set ratio of journeypersons to oversee the training of apprentices. The majority of the current supply of journeypersons will retire in the next decade. Without enough new or existing journeypersons working in the trades, who will oversee the training of the next generation of apprentices? Young apprentices, mature apprentices, entrepreneurial apprentices, those in high-cost remote areas, those in high-wage, high-demand trades—all face unique barriers. Each requires support tailored to his particular situation. One size does not fit all.

We are urging the federal government to review and modernize apprenticeship support policies to ensure that more apprentices complete their programs. We've already provided Minister Finley with a suite of nine actionable ideas. I would like to highlight three of them for you today: first, ensure that contractors on crown procurement and maintenance contracts are registering and training apprentices; second, provide a financial incentive to employers of record when an apprentice gets his or her certificate of qualification in a Red Seal trade; third, direct support from labour market agreements to increase the number of pre-apprenticeship training programs at colleges and polytechnics targeting at-risk youth and poorly integrated new entrants.

Apprentices are working toward a career in a skilled trade, not just a job. Since apprentices are considered employees instead of learners, they're not eligible for the same government financial support programs offered to university and college students, and the apprenticeship support programs that do exist are simply inadequate. Youth wishing to pursue an apprenticeship, including college and university graduates, often have no applied skills experience and have trouble finding employers to register them as apprentices. The lack of exposure to workshops at home or shop classes in school poses a significant entry barrier for high school graduates who would like to pursue a career in the skilled trades but cannot convince an employer to take them on.

The answer is pre-apprenticeship training programs that provide introductory training to the trade at a college or polytechnic. They would make the students more attractive to potential employers, who would then be willing to sponsor their training. Mature apprentices, on the other hand, have often worked in the trades for years, and have decided to formally pursue their certification as a master craftsperson.

• (1010)

Unlike other post-secondary students, mature apprentices receive virtually no financial assistance despite typically facing entrenched monthly financial obligations. Multiple studies have shown the most common reason for non-completion of apprentices is financial pressure.

The time has come for apprentices to be valued equally with post-secondary students—and supported as such. In 2012, if addressing looming skills shortages and increasing apprenticeship completion rates is a public policy concern, Canada must provide financial supports to apprentices beyond EI and taxable grants.

As we did with the brain drain of the 1990s, perhaps the time has come for a similar term that acknowledges the wider implications of the drain the Canadian economy will experience over the next

decade if we do not see more apprentices through to completion and get them plugged into the building of infrastructure that is required by an innovative and productive economy.

If we were to ask Thomas Friedman, he would probably say that skilled trades workers are the new knowledge workers.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation.

We'll now move to Anna Toneguzzo.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anna Toneguzzo (Manager, Government Relations and Policy Research, Public Policy, Association of Canadian Community Colleges): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

[*English*]

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the committee's study.

• (1015)

ACCC's 130 member colleges, institutes, polytechnics, and university colleges, hereafter referred to as colleges, are significant providers of in-class training for apprentices. Our presentation focuses on the role of colleges and how we can work together to enhance apprenticeship opportunities.

More must be done to valorize trades occupations. Rather than “tradespeople”, we use the term “trades professionals”. We are collaborating with Canadian and international partners to change perceptions and increase recognition of the advanced skills required for trades professions. The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and Skills Canada have done excellent work through research and the promotion of trades professions. The careersintrades.ca website should be promoted more widely to youth, parents, and guidance counsellors.

Trades programs must be made accessible for disadvantaged and aboriginal youth. A 2012 Statistics Canada study found there are 906,000 youth age 15 to 29 who are neither employed nor in education, or NEET as some may have heard.

These youth were hit hardest during the recession and will remain vulnerable should the economy decline once again. Aboriginal youth are a key part of the solution to addressing skills shortages. For example, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada reports that in the next 10 years the natural resources sector will need to fill approximately 400,000 new jobs, while the same number of aboriginal youth will be entering the labour market.

Colleges offer supportive and inclusive learning environments, flexible programming, and wraparound support services that foster student success. Through college pre-trades or pre-apprenticeship programs, youth can learn about different trades professions over the course of an academic year.

For youth who may not have the high school diploma to qualify for these programs, colleges offer laddering opportunities through upgrading and essential skills programs. There is a need for enhanced funding to support participation in these programs—for example, through the labour market development agreements, conditions to those agreements, and the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy.

Employer engagement is key to increasing apprenticeship opportunities. A major barrier for potential apprentices is that they cannot find employers to sponsor them. Many colleges are assisting students in pre-trades programs to find employer sponsors. There is a need for more and improved incentives for employers to hire apprentices.

We must ensure apprentices have the financial support they need. ACCC members report that the lag in payment of employment insurance for apprentices during in-class training is a major barrier to completion. When apprentices are not paid during the in-class training, many drop out or do not return for the next level. The Government of Canada must fast-track EI claims for apprentices or introduce a mechanism that would provide bridge funding.

The Government of Canada apprenticeship completion grant does provide an incentive. However, this grant should be treated like other post-secondary grants, bursaries, and scholarships and be tax exempt.

We must ensure registrants in pre-trades programs are aware they can apply for Canada study grants and loans. For the most part, these programs are post-secondary level and, having a duration of one academic year, they meet the CSLP eligibility requirements. Aboriginal post-secondary funding and training support must recognize trades programs as eligible.

Apprentices need improved mobility options. The Red Seal program allows for the recognition of qualifications. However, apprentices moving from one jurisdiction to another and sometimes even from one employer to another often hit barriers and cannot have their hours and technical training levels recognized. We must find a way to standardize apprenticeship levels across jurisdictions, to create pathways that are more efficient.

Prior learning assessment and recognition services offered by colleges could be used more efficiently to facilitate the mobility of apprentices. PLAR can be costly to deliver. Institutions and learners would benefit from increased support for PLAR assessments.

There is a need for investments in college trades training infrastructure. The Government of Canada knowledge infrastructure program supported much-needed job creation during the recession and delivered 246 projects that expanded capacity at colleges. Among these, 31 were specifically for the construction of trades facilities.

The KIP investments made a difference but fell short of demand. Due to space and equipment limitations, colleges have to wait-list students interested in trades programs, while employers are saying they cannot find enough people with trades qualifications. The results of a 2012 survey of Canadian employers by the ManpowerGroup indicates skilled trades professions are the most difficult positions to fill. Further federal investment in college infrastructure

would build on the legacy of KIP to allow Canada to meet the demand for advanced skills. Colleges would also benefit from increased support to upgrade equipment in trades and apprenticeship facilities.

To sum up, we need to valorize trades professions, increase access for disadvantaged and aboriginal youth, improve incentives for employers to hire apprentices, ensure apprentices have the financial supports and the mobility options they need to reach certification, and invest in college infrastructure and equipment to ensure colleges have the capacity to respond.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

I guess we'll conclude with Mr. Reiser. Go ahead.

Mr. Henry Reiser (Director, Yukon and British Columbia, Dean, Faculty of Trades and Technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Council of Deans of Trades and Apprenticeship Canada): I'm Henry Reiser, and I'm representing the Council of Deans of Trades and Apprenticeship Canada. We are the educational leaders in trades apprenticeship training in the country. I'm going to speak to many of the issues that have been raised by every speaker.

The first is the lack of apprenticeships for grads of pre-apprenticeship programs. In British Columbia, for example, we have ACE-IT programs and foundation programs. In the ACE-IT program, students at risk can get dual credits, complete their high school diploma, and get trade recognition for level one. Foundation programs are simply pre-apprenticeship programs.

The problem we're having right now is that there is only a 24% completion rate in British Columbia, as an example. We need to promote and increase the apprenticeship training tax credit to the employers. I met yesterday with the vice-president of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association. We discussed precisely this issue of access to pre-apprenticeship graduates, and the point was raised that small and medium-sized enterprises simply lack the revenues to train. They find it too high a financial risk for them to take on apprentices, so they prefer to go down the street and hire certified workers. There's also a strategy that should be used to work with CAF on promoting trades and encourage employers to indenture apprentices.

It's important that government take a leadership role in identifying the strategic importance of a skilled workforce. The impact of temporary foreign workers on Canadian youth and their ability to find apprenticeship placements has a very negative effect. We do not have a shortage of people, we have a shortage of skilled workers. It appears that business and industry are looking to satisfy the skilled-worker demand with trained foreign workers rather than investing in Canadians. This tactic does not address a sustainable apprenticeship model looking forward.

A second matter of primary importance is the whole issue of funding. As has been mentioned before, many apprentices cannot afford to complete the in-school component of their trades training simply because of the delay in collecting their EI payments. We need to overhaul the EI strategy for apprentices. We need to remind everybody that apprentices are excused from their normal work practices, and this funding is to pay them simply to attend classes. We need to remove any waiting period, and we need to simplify the application process. My son is a third-year sheet metal apprentice and has been unable to collect his EI twice, because of the complexities of the process. Many apprentices who have not received their funding—either at all or long after the training period—leave the process in frustration and simply don't complete.

The third issue is the mobility of apprentices. We need to come up with a national strategy. The work is not necessarily available in the region where the apprentices live, and they have to relocate to the west, for example, as has been mentioned on numerous occasions. We need to align the content of the levels to ensure mobility, and we need to work with the directors of apprenticeship to coordinate this activity. This is a leadership opportunity for the federal government, which should possibly subsidize as well the relocation costs for apprentices to travel. That is a very high burden on the young and makes it very difficult.

In general, the government has an opportunity here to provide leadership and direction for apprenticeship training within the country.

Thank you.

•(1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that. We appreciate all your comments.

We'll 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, for being here today.

I am going to come back to a point that Ms. Toneguzzo raised and that was raised by two witnesses who appeared during the first part of the meeting. In Canada, it is within the aboriginal population that we see the greatest demographic growth. Many apprenticeships are available in areas with large aboriginal populations. However, aboriginal people are underemployed and underrepresented in apprenticeship programs. You already talked about obstacles and programs that could be adapted. This morning, Mr. Bégin and

Mr. Blakely said that programs needed to be adapted for aboriginal people.

Mrs. Toneguzzo, I would like to hear your comments on this subject. Do you think it would be appropriate to consult aboriginal groups to find out how programs could be better adapted to the reality of young aboriginal people?

Ms. Anna Toneguzzo: Colleges already work a lot with aboriginal communities, especially to offer them programs in the trades. As my colleague Ken Doyle mentioned, once apprentices go to college, they are considered students. They therefore have access to all of the institution's services. In the case of aboriginal people, colleges provide very inclusive services, for example services for elders and places to meet. Apprentices who go to college are welcomed.

Some colleges and institutes now have mobile trades training trailers. These big trucks go to aboriginal communities, where people can take trades training on site. Aboriginal communities told colleges that it was very important for them to receive training in their community, so that their young people didn't always have to travel.

I haven't talked about it, but in the report we submitted to the committee, I included the example of Sault College, in northern Ontario. It established the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Centre to help aboriginal youth and adults who want to be apprentices and work in a trade. The example is described in our report. It could be helpful.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Regarding the mobile training you talked about, another witness told us that the tools were expensive. Going to offer this type of training to aboriginal people, including in remote areas, seems like a good idea, but it requires financial support.

•(1025)

Ms. Anna Toneguzzo: The trades trailers are equipped. They include all of the tools that are necessary for the training. However, all apprentices must have their own tools once they are hired by an employer. I know it is possible to obtain grants and loans for that.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: My second question is about women.

Last Tuesday, representatives from the Centre for the Study of Living Standards told us that in 20 years, the number of women in trades had increased, but that it was mainly in traditionally female areas, for example hairdressing.

How could we attract women to other types of trades? The question is for all of you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Boutin-Sweet. Your time is up, but we'll allow responses, I suppose, for—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: In addition, how could we adapt programs for women?

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll start with Mr. Cherubini.

Mr. Piero Cherubini: We've been at this a long time. I'm not going to say that we have it right, but I think we're making headway. We're getting into our high schools more. Across the country there are partnerships with colleges and high schools where we're exposing more young ladies to the trades. It's still an uphill battle; there's a perception that it's still a bit of a male-dominated trade area, so we still have some work to do.

There are programs in our province that are specifically geared to exposing women to skilled trades. They're offered periodically by the government, and they've had some measure of success. In the model I mentioned earlier that we're delivering now, we've taken the need to find that apprenticeship out of the equation, because they're applying to school. They're not needing that employer to get started. It helps a little in terms of women entering the trades.

The Chair: Nobina, go ahead.

Ms. Nobina Robinson: I just want to say that the issue of women in trades needs to be seen in a bigger context of women in the science, technology, engineering, and math professions. It is a very practical issue. There's a whole society-wide cultural shift that has to happen. You heard from Skills Canada. You heard from Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. To have that kind of changing perception and get younger girls to want to try this, you have to talk to the secondary school systems and the school boards. You can't just look at the colleges to solve that problem. Colleges are facing the issue, just as universities are, of increasing the number of women in hard disciplines.

The Chair: Mr. Reiser, go ahead.

Mr. Henry Reiser: In addition to that, it's retention of women once they've completed the apprenticeship program in a workplace that is not friendly to women. Look at something as simple as washrooms, or washrooms in the field. Those issues need to be addressed to accommodate the female worker.

The Chair: Did you want to comment, Anna?

Ms. Anna Toneguzzo: Yes, I have examples of people who are interested in getting women in trades programs at colleges. Nova Scotia Community College has a women in trades program for aboriginal women. There are examples of those kinds of programs at colleges across the country.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Leitch, go ahead.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Thank you very much, everyone, for taking the time to discuss this important issue with us.

I'm a pediatric orthopedic surgeon. I essentially went through an apprenticeship program. I'm a very highly skilled carpenter and one of the things we've heard about at length is employment insurance and how it should be incorporated into our programming.

When I trained, I went to work every day. We had one or two hours where we took education every day and then we spent the rest of the day at on-the-job training. I have three questions.

First, with respect to the trades, why don't the trades do that? Why don't you facilitate that instead of having people take blocks of time off where they're not using their hands and are not able to do things?

It seems like a natural thing to do, and I found it very helpful in my trade.

Second, in 1993 there was an adoption of national training standards by physicians across the country, because we had portability problems. We had mobility problems. We came to that realization amongst ourselves, without government intervention. We fixed our problem and now we have portability across the country. There were some accommodations that had to be made, but why doesn't that happen here? What is the barrier to resolving that mobility issue for tradesmen? And I take Anna's point that we should be using the term "trades professionals" as opposed to "tradesmen" or "tradeswomen". I think you're absolutely correct in that.

What is that barrier to mobility that you can't get over? Who is the barrier? Obviously, physicians can do a lot of headlocking and we managed to get over it. Why haven't you?

Third, a little bit of it comes from the Mohawk College comment. This is specifically for Mohawk College, because I'm a health care professional myself. Could you comment on the economic impacts with respect to this new program that you're implementing and the specialization in health and technology? I think that's very important for people to know about, areas of specialization. We do that in my profession. Obviously, you're striving to do that, but what's the economic impact of it?

• (1030)

The Chair: I think Mr. Reiser wants to start.

Mr. Henry Reiser: I can speak to the block release. There are a number of different models available. There's day release, where one day of the week apprentices are released from their jobs to come for training. The problem, however, with a day release process is that it protracts the length of apprenticeship from a short time to a much longer time. So it's not really preferred, but it is available.

The other thing is that there are a number of novel online delivery models that are available. This has been partially funded by federal sources. So when apprentices are working at remote sites, this allows them to study while working in the field.

Mobility is a very interesting challenge. It is provincially dominated and controlled by a series of directors of apprentices. This is an opportunity not to walk into a room with a big stick and say "Thou shalt", but to walk into the room as a federal government and ask how you can facilitate—

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I beg to differ. Why don't you all walk into the room together and come to an agreement? We did that as a profession. Why don't you?

The Chair: If you wish to conclude, I see that there are others who want to respond.

Mr. Reiser, do you have any further comments?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: I just encourage you to do that. I agree with you; it has to be about accommodation.

The Chair: Just a moment. Do you want to answer that?

Mr. Henry Reiser: It's the structure itself. I met with our director of apprenticeships two days ago. He mentioned the same mobility issue, because he knew I was coming to Ottawa and he wanted to speak to me and make sure that we were saying things that were appropriate.

You have a provincial issue. I think it's very important that, again, provinces are talking to provinces and are trying to work together. Every body has its own agenda. There's an opportunity here. That is all I am trying to say.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Ms. Robinson.

Ms. Nobina Robinson: Just to come back to Ms. Leitch, you mentioned your medical training experience and what has happened in that field. That was because the profession chose to build on portability. You can't look at the colleges and polytechnics and expect that we can dictate portability. These professions are governed by their—

Ms. Kellie Leitch: No, but you can encourage it. Why do you not find that happening?

Ms. Nobina Robinson: Each of these 300 trades are governed by their own logic, their own structure, and their own employers. Those are the people who have to say that a welder is a welder. However, there is something called the Red Seal program, which is the first step. But that is for only 55 professions out of the 300 trades.

The Chair: Your time is up.

Mr. Ali Ghiassi: I might be able to briefly address Ms. Leitch's question. I think part of the issue for medical doctors is that they have their own governing bodies in each profession. In Ontario, the government has begun to do that by establishing the Ontario College of Trades. I was in the government at the time. The idea behind this entity is really to provide the profile and the central planning for the trades in the same way it is done for the professions.

As you can imagine, it is somewhat more unwieldy, because you are talking about hundreds and hundreds of trades rather than one profession. Nevertheless, I think it is something that is needed. You need to be able to centrally plan this if you're going to have true mobility between the provinces. That has always been an issue. Ontario has begun to go that way. It is still very much in its infancy, but I can tell you that the mobility issue was one of the main reasons for doing it.

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you. We will move to Ms. Charlton.

Okay, make a quick comment, Ms. Leitch.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Seriously?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: He usually gives you guys all the latitude.

The Chair: Okay, make your short comment.

All right, we'll move to Ms. Charlton.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Thank you very much, Chair. I am particularly pleased to see representatives from Mohawk College here.

Being a member of Parliament from Hamilton, I know that Mohawk has had a really long and strong history of bringing labour,

industry, and the college to the table on apprenticeship programs, and I think it's part of why it has been so successful in the past.

Just let me ask you one really quick question. We've heard in past testimony that the average age of apprentices is 25. Is that the experience at Mohawk as well?

Mr. Piero Cherubini: I don't have an exact figure. Anecdotally, we're in that range as well. It is in the mid to high 20s.

Ms. Chris Charlton: That's a relatively late age for people to start contemplating what their future career may be. This suggests, I think, and we have heard it from others, that there are significant barriers to entering apprenticeships.

Mr. Reiser, you spoke to conversations with the manufacturers and exporters on the challenges SMEs have, from an employer perspective, in terms of offering apprenticeships. I certainly appreciate those.

I think there are also a number of barriers potential apprentices face in wanting to enter apprenticeship programs. I'm hoping that as a committee, we will look at both sides of that equation.

Mr. Reiser, again, you spoke about EI and the challenges the current EI system imposes on apprentices with respect to getting money in a timely fashion. We've certainly talked a lot on this committee about how processing times have now increased rather than decreased and that we've added to rather than reduced the challenges.

I wonder whether all of you might comment on what you think is the most pressing issue we as legislators need to address to make apprenticeships attractive and tenable for young Canadians. Come at it from the apprentice side and tell me what your number one recommendation would be that we need to look at. Thank you.

Mr. Henry Reiser: Number one would be access to an apprenticeship.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Having said that—I'd like you to be really quick on this one—if the reality is that young people are getting access to apprenticeships but they're not completing, then that can't be the only barrier, right?

Mr. Henry Reiser: Well, no, there are other issues around non-completion. One of the issues is the requirement for the certification to work in the field. In terms of it being mandatory in such trades as plumbing and electrical, as been mentioned before, that's not across the board. So why would they complete when they don't have to?

The other thing is that employers are employing workers without that requirement.

The Chair: Does anyone else want to respond?

Go ahead, Mr. Cherubini.

Mr. Piero Cherubini: If I had to pick one... The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum did a study a few years ago, and found that perhaps 82% of employers who were eligible to hire an apprentice chose not to. For a myriad of reasons, they're not participating in apprenticeship programs.

So if I had a wish, it would be how to engage those employers. I would think, though, if we engage those employers, the supply is there. Young people are there. They want to participate. They just can't get their foot in the door to get started.

The Chair: Mr. Doyle, and then Ms. Toneguzzo.

Mr. Ken Doyle: To answer your question, I'd say the fundamental problem is that we're treating the apprentices as employees instead of students. We need to see them as students, treat them as such, and provide them with the support that we provide to other post-secondary students.

If we keep using 1990s mechanisms to support apprentices, we're going to get 1990s completion rates going forward.

• (1040)

Ms. Anna Toneguzzo: My comment is from a personal point of view. My son did his apprenticeship training in Quebec, where it's done all up front but with no real understanding of the pathways in terms of how to find an employer who's going to sponsor you.

So I think, although it's an employer's perspective, I think from a young person's perspective there's not even the understanding that first they have to find someone who will take them on. I think there's a challenge there in terms of understanding the pathways into apprenticeship for youth.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds left for a comment or a short question.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mohawk College has been doing a superb job with first nations communities in trying to bring more first nations students into the college, and I would love to have heard just a little bit more about whether that's being reflected on the apprenticeship side as well.

The Chair: Do you want to make a short comment?

Mr. Piero Cherubini: Yes, just very quickly.

We work very closely with Six Nations. A couple of years ago we started partnering with their training institutions to help them develop their own instructors to deliver their own training. It's been a really neat experience. We've evolved to the state now where their instructors come down and do joint PD with our instructors, and our instructors go and do PD with theirs.

We've taken a little bit of a different look at the apprenticeship piece of our partnership, because they do prefer to deliver on their own, to their own folks, in their communities.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll conclude with Mr. Daniel.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Thank you very much.

Along the same themes as my colleague across the way, and Kellie here, I really still don't understand why the associations, that have colleges from every province and territory under their group, cannot come up with an agreement in terms of standardization across the board, particularly as probably more than 50% of all the tradespeople, as we've heard this morning, are from the building trades in terms of apprenticeships.

Can you comment on that?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Reiser.

Mr. Henry Reiser: Why are the directors of apprenticeship not getting along? Is that your question?

Mr. Joe Daniel: No, the question is standardization across Canada.

Mr. Henry Reiser: Well, each province and each region has its own individual standards, and they are based around Red Seal standards of competencies.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Red Seal is applicable across the country, right?

Mr. Henry Reiser: Correct. What an electrician, for example, needs to know to be a competent electrician is outlined in the competencies that individual will gain on the job and in school.

Remember that in apprenticeship training, 15% of that is in school, with the other 85% in practical skills that are learned in the workplace.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Yes, but surely the same skills would apply across the country.

Mr. Henry Reiser: That is correct, but it's a question of when they are delivered within the levels. In level one, for example, B.C. and Alberta may have different competencies to be mastered. If we can get the provinces to deliver the same competencies and the same levels, then that would greatly enhance the mobility of the individual apprentice across the country.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to make a comment?

Ms. Robinson?

Ms. Nobina Robinson: Well, that's just going back to my earlier point. There are industry professions here. That standardization must come from the employer community that is setting the standard that the electrician needs to be trained to. We are the delivery agent. When a college or a polytechnic receives the block training, we have almost a scripted curriculum we must follow, which has been designed by that profession.

On other fronts—and let's broaden this discussion to post-secondary—that's where we are seeking mobility. Within Polytechnics Canada, we have a “my student is your student” arrangement. In this country, there is no credit transfer system, there is no academic mobility. Within apprenticeship, which is so very specifically tied to each and every different profession, we need to look to the employer community to show leadership, and to say, across the country, that a welder is a welder.

Now, there are these 55 Red Seals. You're asking why we can't do it for all 300 professions.

Mr. Joe Daniel: No, I didn't ask that. I asked why you couldn't focus on the building trades, for example, since most of the apprentices are primarily from there, and the building trades should be uniform across the country. I don't think that just passing it back to the employer is the answer. The question is, how can you as associations, etc. do something to make standardization, at least on some of the widely used apprenticeships—

Ms. Nobina Robinson: I would suggest the positive place here is the common curricula on certain well-defined professions. That exists and that gets shared.

For example, innovations in trades training—we heard about mobile training—can be shared better, but will take resources to do that. Each college is coming up with solutions for their place-based needs. How do you make that a national case? That requires funding.

•(1045)

The Chair: Have you finished your questioning?

Mr. Joe Daniel: I was going to ask one more question.

The Chair: Okay, you can ask one more question.

Mr. Joe Daniel: In Europe, in Britain and places like that, apprenticeship starts right out of high school. What's stopping that happening here?

Mr. Henry Reiser: Well, it is happening; it's happening in British Columbia and it's happening in Ontario with Ontario youth apprenticeship programs. It's happening with ACE-IT programs.

Again, the primary challenge is that students are completing these pre-apprenticeship programs and are not able to secure an apprenticeship because of the employer's aversion to the investment, due to whatever economic burden of the training is perceived by the

employer. The employer has a tradition of hiring its skilled workers off the street, particularly large employers, and that tradition has to change.

The Chair: Mr. Doyle, do you have a comment to conclude with?

Mr. Ken Doyle: In Europe, they really value the craftsman and there is no shame in pursuing an apprenticeship straight out of high school and then pursuing higher education. In Canada, it's seen as a third or fourth route if you couldn't get into college or university. Philosophically, that has to change if we want to see improvements.

We do a great job at graduating people from college and university. We generate a lot of highly qualified people, but a credential is one thing and having skills to apply is different, so we really need to move towards fostering highly qualified skilled people to put the theory and the skill to use, to make things better.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone, for your presentations and your forthrightness in answering the questions. We appreciate that very much.

With that, we'll adjourn.

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