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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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•(1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)): I will now call the meeting to order. We've established that our translation is working so far. I'm hoping that if there are any translation issues, we'll deal with them.

I would like to welcome the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. We will ask Maximilian Metzger and Christiana Tings, who are there, to introduce themselves. Also, we will hear from representatives of the International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Institute for Vocational Education and Training.

We look forward very much to hearing from you this morning. We know that you've done some very interesting and favourable things as far as apprentices are concerned, both for young apprentices and for female apprentices. You've had a fairly good success rate and we want to hear how you've done that.

Initially we will have a presentation from each of you, and then we will open it up to questions from our committee members.

I'm assuming that you've heard all of that. If you have, we would ask you to open with introductions and then brief statements.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation in Education and Research, German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) (Interpretation): Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to have this exchange with you. We hope the technical conditions will enable us to have a good exchange. Please signal if you are experiencing any communication problems.

If I may, I would like to make the introductions. I am responsible for the department. I am the deputy director-general. We are responsible for all countries outside of Europe, including training in science and research.

With me is Mrs. Christiana Tings, who is responsible for international cooperation in education and training. Also here is Mr. Barske, who is an expert in co-ops and education. He works for an agency that works for us. We also have with us Mrs. Verfürth, who is an expert at the German Institute for Vocational Education and Training. She focuses on the Americas and India. Mrs. Verfürth is part of the German institute that looks after research in the area of training. She does scrutiny of regulations and she looks at international standards and international cooperation.

Today we'll be talking about progress made in occupational training in Germany, unless you, Mr. Chair, would like to first of all give us some information on the Canadian system and point out any areas in which you have a particular interest.

•(1110)

The Chair: As a committee we've been hearing witnesses in our Canadian jurisdiction to the effect that we should deal much earlier in our school system with vocational training and apprenticeship for potential occupations than we do now. We should perhaps have a promotional package that would involve the parents as well much earlier than we do. We have an interest in that area. Then how do we get our provinces to have similar programs that would address real needs and shortages in particular areas? In that regard, how do we deal with our first nations community and aboriginals? How might we be able to better engage them, perhaps where they're located? We're looking at ways and means to improve our system, and anything you might give us in that regard would be helpful.

With that, I'll turn it over to you to make your presentations.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): In that case, I will provide you with some basics on vocational training in Germany. Occupational training means we have a dual system whereby students are employed by companies and do part of their training in a vocational school. That's what we mean when we talk about dual training.

In Germany, this training has been given a great deal of priority. It doesn't have the same reputation as university training perhaps, but it has a lot more prestige here in Germany than it does compared to other countries where, if you don't go the university route, you're not viewed as having as good an education.

In Germany, as is the case in other German-speaking countries, such as Austria and Switzerland, this dual training goes back to the Middle Ages. We have a very long tradition here. The biggest challenge lately has been to adapt this training to technological changes or to meet industry requirements, and where we have technological needs, we need to develop new professions without necessarily turning back to the old traditions.

Up until now, we have been more or less successful in Germany, as is the case in Austria and Switzerland. There is very little unemployment among young people, and that's something that we feel is very positive, unlike the case in many other European countries. The demand for our occupational training is very high, both within and outside the European Union. That's why international cooperation plays a very important role in occupational training.

What I have understood is that in Canada, you have a very good occupational training program, you have very little youth unemployment, and you have a good level of training, so we're supposing that occupational training in Canada works very well and is very successful.

Those are my introductory remarks. I would now invite Ms. Verfürth to present the basics of vocational training in Germany.

•(1115)

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Maren Verfürth (Research Associate, International Cooperation and Advisory Services, German Institute for Vocational Education and Training) (Interpretation): Mr. Metzger introduced me. I come from the German Institute for Vocational Education and Training. I've been there for three years now and I'm responsible for America, Africa, and India.

Today I'd like to give you a brief description of our dual system and say a few words about the institute. The dual training system in Germany, as Mr. Metzger said, comprises two parts to the training route. First of all, there's training offered in the company and we have vocational schools. As you can see on the slide, responsibility is shared by the federal government, which looks after the company component, and the vocational schools, which come under the länder, or provinces.

I will give you a little overview of this dual system. This system combines theory and a practicum. There are two places where the training is offered. As I said, this has been recognized worldwide and it has demonstrated its usefulness. This is a very good occupational training program. What's important to note is that this is a shared responsibility between the state and industry or the economy. There are 350 state-recognized training occupations. They're recognized in legislation. These two components play an important role in defining these trades.

More than 50% of the young people decide to begin training within this dual system and many companies are therefore prepared to provide training in their companies. They assume the cost of this training because they feel this is the best way to ensure that they have highly skilled workers who have been trained in the company, thereby reducing their staffing costs. Because this has an impact, it will in fact reduce recruiting costs.

The advantage for the young people, the apprentices, is that they are trained to meet market needs, and therefore, they have a better opportunity of finding jobs. They can also remain in the company where they trained. The advantage to the state is it costs the state less money. As a result of this participation with industry, the cost is borne by the economy, and we always have a good pool, an adequate pool, of skilled workers.

The main advantages of this dual system are that we train people based on industry needs and, as Mr. Metzger stated earlier, there is very little youth unemployment. I think it's standing at 8%. That's not very much compared to the rest of the EU.

This dual system wasn't set up just a few weeks ago; it goes right back to the Middle Ages.

•(1120)

Right now we're working with 35 different countries and we see there is a growing dual system now throughout the world.

The five keys to success are as follows:

The first is there is the cooperation between the government and industry, as I just described. The state and industry set the parameters for the occupational training, the funding, the implementation of a program, and the funding of that program.

The second point is learning on the job. Apprentices learn to work independently, and they acquire a variety of skills that are both practical and theoretical at the vocational school.

The third point is the acceptance of national standards. We have standards that are accepted nationally, and in the 16 länder, these standards are comparable. If you go to Westphalia you can learn a skill, and you can easily transfer that skill to Bavaria.

The fourth key to success is that we have qualified training staff within the companies. These people must be trained just as they are in the schools. That way we can provide ongoing consistent training throughout the program.

The fifth point pertains to research and career guidance. Our institute provides this. We do research so the system is always up to date, and we can tweak it to ensure our system meets the evolving needs of industry. We can always adapt our system to meet these needs.

I would like to talk about the training benefits from the perspective of the companies. In Germany, three-quarters of all companies do in fact offer apprenticeship spots. The reason they do this is this is the best way to ensure they have enough qualified staff on hand, and the people feel they are a part of the company, a company that provides training. The apprentices identify with the companies, but they also have a positive image of the company. The company has qualified staff, and this increases the value of the company.

I will give you an example. An apprentice earns a monthly salary of approximately \$1,000 Canadian. Another important aspect is that every time I make this presentation before a foreign audience there is this realization that the funding for apprenticeships comes from the companies themselves. Seventy-five per cent of the funding comes from the national employment agency, the länder, the provinces.

•(1125)

On one final point, our institute came into being in 1970. We are the international centre for developing skills in the vocational field. Mr. Metzger has already said that we are active in the area of research and guidance, and now we have a law that governs the system. We're funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. We have 630 members on staff and 29 apprentices. On the last slide you can see a flow chart of our organization. We have 16 different sectors of work, and we have a central department.

If you have any questions whatsoever, I'd be prepared to answer them.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Thank you, Ms. Verfürth, for your overview.

I would suggest that we wrap up our presentation, and we will take any questions you may have there in Canada.

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

We will open it up to questions. We'll start with Ms. Charlton.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

[Member spoke in German, interpreted as follows:]

Yes, I'm very glad that we will have the opportunity to talk about the system in Germany.

My parents were born in Germany. My German is not good enough to keep asking questions in German, so I will switch to English.

[English]

I appreciate the emphasis that you put on the partnership between the government and industry in terms of providing opportunities for apprenticeships. I wonder if you could speak a little bit about the role, if any, of labour unions. I know that union density is still quite high in Germany, and is very active in industrial workplaces. I imagine that there is an active role, at least a supportive role, and I wonder if you could speak to that a little bit, whether it's a tripartite relationship or a bipartite relationship at the root of the success of the apprenticeship program.

Ms. Maren Verfürth (Interpretation): It's not really only three stakeholders; there are a lot more stakeholders that are involved. For example, when it comes to developing standards, it's not only the trade unions that are part of this, but also the employers, the state, the länder, and all of this is moderated in the BIBB, in our institute.

•(1130)

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Maybe I can add to this.

We have quite a good balance between the employers, employees, and trade unions. These institutions have a dual function. On the one hand they are represented in the companies. The entrepreneurs are organized in their own associations, and the employees and apprentices are part of this. They belong to a trade union, or they can belong to a trade union if they so choose. That's the basic

situation in the industry. Apprentices are integrated into the work process. They are, so to speak, normal employees, workers.

In our institute, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, or BIBB, we have advisory councils. In these advisory councils, trade unions are always represented just as well as the employers' associations, and they can have their input.

Mr. Barske wants to add to this.

Mr. Hannes Barske (Senior Scientific Officer, Project Management Agency, German Aerospace Center, International Bureau of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) (Interpretation): If I understood your question correctly, you were also asking about the different levels. At the national level, in the main committee, the trade unions are represented, but they are also represented at the local level. The trade unions participate at all levels. That goes back to a time in the late 19th century when social laws were developed in Germany under Bismarck. They wanted to make sure that not only the employers participated in these very important social developments, but also the trade unions.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Thank you.

I'd like to follow up in a different vein. When you spoke about incentives and particularly the incentives for industry to make the system work, you talked about the reduced staffing and recruitment costs. You talked about, of course, having a trained workforce at the end of the apprenticeship and training program.

Does the German government provide any financial incentives to industrial partners for the creation of those positions, or does industry just understand that it's in its own rational self-interest to be a full partner in the apprenticeship program?

Ms. Christiana Tings (Deputy Head, International Cooperation in Education and Training, European Union Programs, German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) (Interpretation): Basically, it's in industry's best interest to offer training spots, to make sure they have skilled labour. In difficult economic times, of course, we have to have certain agreements between the government and the employers' associations. They sign a training pact to make sure we have a sufficient number of training spots. This is also funded with financial support from the European Union. There are programs that promote new training spots in companies, to give incentives to companies to make room for apprentices.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): I would like to add something to that. The principle behind it is that there shouldn't be an incentive. The companies should see it as in their interest to see the training of young people as an investment in their future, and that normally works. But if the economic situation is too volatile, then we interfere just a little bit to help it along, but not very strongly.

The Chair: Thank you for that exchange. We'll now go to Mr. Mayes.

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

Thank you very much to the witnesses for being here today.

Your trades training in Germany is world renowned. I read a report on the structure and policy of your trades program, and I was very impressed. One of the challenges we have in Canada is that the average age of entry to the trades is 26. Introduction to the trades in your education system starts in grade school.

Can you tell me how you determine the students that follow the educational trade path and at what age they start?

• (1135)

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Well, that is quite a problem actually. In the past decades, the separation between an academic education and a non-academic education started really early, probably too early. That is why we have to do quite a bit these days to make sure that both tracks are more permeable, so that you can start vocational training and then continue on with academic university courses. The split happens very early, and it is done based on the interest of the young people.

There is a certain inherent risk, the risk that the students with higher, more developed talents choose the academic track, and the less well developed ones choose vocational training. It's the job of politicians to do something about this and to make sure that both educational tracks are equal. But the split really happens at the age of 15 or 16.

Maybe I should add that we have a situation more and more often in Germany where young people do strive to go to university but decide to be an apprentice first.

Ms. Maren Verfürth (Interpretation): Maybe I can give you an example citing my professional background. I did my school leaving exam. Until 18 I went to grammar school. Then I decided to do vocational training: European secretary, international office manager, I believe, is the equivalent. Then I decided, after finishing that, to go to university. You can do that; it is permeable in that way.

Mr. Hannes Barske (Interpretation): Maybe I can add that it is no longer the case that if you do not have a school-leaving exam that you will have to become an apprentice. The system is so well recognized now and so valued that even people who have the highest school leaving exam choose this vocational training to learn a trade, because it opens up a whole array of paths until the so-called master certificate. They can make just about as much money as somebody who went to university.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): I can tell you an interesting story.

We have a new president here at our Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Professor Esser. He learned a trade. He's a baker, a simple baker. After becoming a baker he went to university. He got his school leaving exam and he went to university. He got his Ph.D. and he became a professor.

Those sorts of careers are possible. They're not the rule, but they are possible. Our political goal is to open up more opportunities for careers like that and to make our system more flexible.

Mr. Colin Mayes: Thank you. I'd like to be at coffee break with your baker.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mayes.

We'll now move to Madame Boutin-Sweet.

[Translation]

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

Good morning to all of you. I will be asking my questions in French.

I would like to begin with your dual system. I understand that part of the training is provided in the company workplace and the other part in a vocational school. Here, in Canada, we do the same thing, but we do have some issues with the school portion.

In Canada, apprentices start a little bit later than they do in Germany. On the financial side, people are entitled to employment insurance benefits and often have to wait quite a while before receiving their initial benefits. This explains why some individuals decide not to enroll as apprentices or simply drop out.

How have you resolved this problem? Does having apprentices start younger have an impact? Moreover, if your system includes apprentices who are slightly older—individuals who are already in the labour force—how do you deal with the financial issues when they go back to school?

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): The financial side is not much of a problem. As Ms. Verfürth already said, apprentices earn money right from the start. They are paid like regular workers. They get less money, of course. It's a modest wage. You can typically not live on it 100%. But a typical situation is that these young people, when they're 16 or 17, continue to live at home and then they get a little bit of a wage and that is enough to live on.

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): If there are problems, if they have to take an apprenticeship in another town, the federal office gives a certain subsidy to pay for the additional rent they have to pay.

Mr. Hannes Barske (Interpretation): Maybe I can add that the trainees and apprentices who leave the lower or higher secondary school and start an apprenticeship have to go to school. They have one or two years left before they are allowed to leave school.

We have a legal basis for that. They have to continue vocational training in the vocational schools. These vocational schools are organized and financed through the 16 länder, or provinces. That's where a large part of the public financing goes. So that question doesn't arise; they don't have to wonder how they will pay for their vocational school, because it is paid for.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Do the slightly older apprentices also receive a salary when they are doing the academic portion?

[English]

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Yes.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: I understood that the answer is yes. I can see you nodding your heads. Thank you.

My second question pertains to women.

In Germany, apparently 41% of the people participating in the apprenticeship program are women. In Canada, only 15% are women. How do you attract women to the program?

[English]

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): I don't think we can give you a serious answer to that question. It happens by itself. We don't really do anything. We don't interfere or guide it.

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): Everybody chooses the profession they would like to choose. It could be a carpenter, or it could be a hairdresser. You might have male or female apprentices. Some professions are more of a female profession, and others are more of a male profession. That's the same for the vocational training as it is for the academic training.

Mr. Hannes Barske (Interpretation): We are not talking about a program as such. It's not a program that has a beginning and an end. Our system is part of our education system in Germany. It's part and parcel of the whole education system. In Germany it's based on federal law, and it's guaranteed.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Maybe I can give you a comparison to academic education.

It used to be a fact that in the past there were fewer female students, but right now more than 50% of the students in the universities in Germany are female, and the same also goes for vocational training. It's a natural development. There were no special incentives or measures taken on the side of the government. We didn't do anything.

• (1145)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Boutin-Sweet, for that exchange.

We'll now move to Mr. Daniel for his round of questioning.

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

It sounds like you have the perfect system there, so my question is how many dropouts there are from your programs, where people actually drop out and change to other things, or don't complete their programs.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): We do not have the latest numbers available. We can't give you a concrete answer.

I'm sure we do have a certain number of dropouts, which then is represented in the unemployment rate. We'll have to send you those numbers in a few days' time because the recent numbers just came out and we don't have them handy now.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Obviously, Germany is a growing nation with growing industry. Are you able to meet all the requirements for your apprentices in industry? In Canada, probably 80% of our industries are small businesses, small businesses being a few people up to about 100 people. It's very difficult for some of the smaller businesses to take on an apprentice. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Yes, we have a similar problem in Germany. We know it very well. It's sort of a labour market, and it depends on supply and demand. Right now we have a situation in which many spots are not being filled especially

in small companies. The majority of companies in Germany are also small trade companies, and they have problems finding the right apprentices. That is, again, the job of the politicians to make sure that enough young people successfully complete their school education so they are ready and available for apprenticeships.

Do you have more concrete numbers, Christiana?

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): Yes, I would like to add that it's not only a problem of the number of apprenticeship spots that are available, but it's also the demographic development in Germany. We have fewer and fewer young people obtaining their school leaving degree. That's why it is important to keep apprenticeships attractive. That's why our federal ministry started a new campaign last year called "Practically Unbeatable". This campaign is aimed at informing young people in the schools, in the youth centres, about this option of learning a trade to make sure we have a sufficient number of skilled labourers in the future.

Ms. Maren Verfürth (Interpretation): An additional point is that there are professions that everybody likes to go into. Electronics expert, technician, and secretary are relatively popular, but then other jobs are less popular. A lot of people send in their applications for those popular spots. The other companies might have more problems attracting apprentices. We have several programs for that to make sure that all the companies and all the professions find apprentices.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): I would like to add that Germany is part of Europe. Right now efforts are being made to bring in young people from other countries in Europe to Germany, to interest them in an apprenticeship in Germany. A certain number of young people from Spain do not have many prospects in their country right now and they attempt to learn German and then come to Germany to be an apprentice.

In the meantime, Mr. Barske has found the number of dropouts.

• (1150)

Mr. Hannes Barske (Interpretation): Yes indeed, you put your finger on an important problem. The system is not that perfect yet. We still have a dropout rate of about 25%. Every fourth apprentice doesn't finish. That's pretty high. That has to do with what my colleague just mentioned, the fact that we have an unsaturated market. We have a number of open apprenticeship spots and that leads to a situation whereby young people might change their mind and decide to go into another job. It's not as it was 10 or 12 years ago when we had a high unemployment rate and anybody who had an apprenticeship spot was happy to have it and wouldn't leave it. That is also a reason we have a higher dropout rate right now.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Obviously the education system across Europe is not the same. How do you deal with foreign qualifications from people coming into your system?

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): In the European Union we have free movement of workers, so if a young person from Spain wants to come to Germany to start training, he can do that. He can use what is available in Germany just as well as any German would.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): A Spanish school leaving degree gives you the right to start training in Germany. The Spanish schools are just as good as the German schools.

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): In Europe we have a very permeable system, but even on a worldwide basis, there's a lot of interest in coming to work in Germany. That's why a new law was instituted last year. It's a new law on recognition of international exams to make sure there's a basis to evaluate whether somebody coming from India with a certain degree has the right to apply for an evaluation. We can say that his degree is equivalent or he has to take additional training to come up to par with German education. We're developing that.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that. We've certainly gone over time.

We'll now move to Mr. Simms for his round of questioning.

Mr. Simms, if you want to participate in this round, go ahead.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Yes, I do.

Say I have a business in Canada, hypothetically, in the aerospace industry, that I make parts for airplanes, and I want to open a branch in Germany, but in order for me to set up there, I need a highly technical skill. Tell me where, as a company owner, I can find out who is available among all recent graduates in the aerospace industry, or any industry for that matter.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): That would be the chambers of commerce and industry, the organizations that the individual companies are organized in within their industry, the industry associations and the chambers of commerce and industry.

Mr. Scott Simms: Does the government have some type of database to allow us to access the availability of skills and labour in any particular area, if, for instance, I wanted to open up in Bavaria?

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): No, it's not a task that the government has to fulfill. You would have to ask the industry organizations for that. I think we do have a German-Canadian chamber of industry and commerce, and they would be able to help you with that kind of information. That's the way to go: approach the German-Canadian chamber of industry and commerce.

• (1155)

Mr. Scott Simms: What we call the Red Seal is basically a recognition in all provinces of a certain trade. You mentioned that earlier for all the states within Germany, within the federation, but you also said that your borders in the European Union are permeable. Do you find that troubling in many of the other European nations about accepting the trades for Germans going abroad? On the other side, do you find it troubling when people with certain skills come in from other countries, say, Spain, Italy or Greece, and you feel that the standards are not there? Is it more difficult on a European basis?

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): It has not really been a problem for us. A lot of the problems solve themselves, really.

For example, the variety of different languages in Europe leads to a situation in which only people with a certain qualification and with a high degree of interest really go into other countries.

Ms. Christiana Tings (Interpretation): We do want to increase mobility in vocational training, and that's why we have a European-level process that is aimed at making sure that professional degrees are also comparable. ECVET is the European Credit system for

Vocational Education and Training. We are in the process of negotiating this so that at the end of their training, they are given information so that they can take this information and work in another country.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): We have to say quite clearly that we're talking about the end of the training, the qualification that they have after undergoing training to guarantee that this qualification is the same on a Europe-wide level. If I understood you correctly, you were asking about the qualification that applies for an apprenticeship in Germany, and here the market is very open. All you need is your equivalent to school leaving diploma, which is considered to be the same and equally good in all of Europe.

The Chair: Thank you for that exchange.

I understand, Monsieur Lapointe, you have one question. We'll just do the one question and a short response, if we can. We'd like to conclude with that.

[Translation]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for participating in this meeting this morning.

From what I can gather, ongoing training and trades training are completely integrated in Germany. These are not two distinct things. Germans enter the system at the age of 15 or 16. The situation is very different here.

I would like to understand how you make this ongoing training possible. You referred to an individual who began as a baker and then obtained a Ph.D. How did he manage to do that? Was he a baker for eight years while attending evening courses with the assistance of the state? How do you make it possible for Germans to go from being a baker to obtaining a Ph.D. in your system?

[English]

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): It's very hard to do in reality. What is more likely going to happen is somebody will first of all do vocational training, work in a company, and then afterwards go to university to add on studies. It doesn't happen at the same time.

• (1200)

Ms. Maren Verfürth (Interpretation): For example, taking the case of our president, Professor Esser, which was mentioned earlier, he went to evening classes to get his school leaving diploma. You have to make sacrifices. You have to have a very strong will to further yourself and then you can do it. I think he would probably tell you the same thing if he were here.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that exchange.

We'd like to keep you for a little longer, but time has run out.

We certainly appreciate, Mr. Metzger and the others, your sharing your information with us. I certainly found your presentation to be very useful and something that we can apply to our study. Hopefully we can take the positive aspects of your system and work toward incorporating those in ours.

Thank you very much for that.

I don't know, Mr. Metzger, if you have any closing comments, but feel free to make them now, and after that, we'll close.

Mr. Maximilian Metzger (Interpretation): Thank you very much. It was our pleasure to talk to you today. We would very much like to see the study when it is concluded, and what effects it will have. We would be very happy to be kept in the loop because we would like to learn from you as well.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for contributing.

With that we'll suspend for five minutes.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: We'll call the meeting back to order.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Chair, just on a point of clarification, as you know, Mr. Cleary gave notice of a motion asking the minister to appear as a result of the privacy breach that impacted over half a million Canadians. I'm wondering whether we're going to be dealing with that in this meeting.

Mr. Cleary obviously isn't here, so I'll be moving that motion on his behalf. I don't know if you need me to read it into the record now.

The Chair: My plan was to suspend the meeting at 12:45 and then deal with that matter. You could raise it at that time if you wish, at 12:45.

Ms. Chris Charlton: We definitely still want to do that even though Mr. Cleary is not here, because it is a really important issue.

The Chair: No, that's fine.

All right, with that, we'll have you present. We generally have each of you present, and then we'll have a round of questions going back and forth between the parties. We will adjourn at 12:45 because we have other committee business to deal with.

Your speaking notes, of course, will be translated en français as we go. Your slide presentation, being in English only, will not be distributed, but we will ensure that portion does get translated and distributed in the course of time.

I'm not sure who's going to present first.

Mr. Wilson, do you want to go ahead, and then we'll proceed to Mr. Diotte?

Mr. Mathew Wilson (Vice-President, National Policy, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of Parliament, for inviting the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters here to discuss these issues.

The issues around youth engagement in the workforce as a whole, apprenticeship programs, and overall skills shortages are major

issues for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and our 10,000 member companies across Canada.

In a recent survey completed by CME of 650 Canadian manufacturers and exporters, we found that one of the largest issues affecting business investment in Canada was the size and strength of the labour force. The same survey also showed that nearly 50% of Canadian companies are facing skill shortages today, and due to labour and skill shortages, almost one-third of companies are considering relocating operations, including production, to other jurisdictions outside of Canada. This would have a tremendous negative economic consequence for the country.

While the skill shortages identified by our companies in the survey covered a wide range of jobs from management and administration to general labour and sales, by far the largest reported shortage was in the skilled trades. Today 50% of companies are facing shortages of skilled trade workers such as welders, machinists, electricians, and engineers, the highest of any occupational segment. It is expected that within five years that number will jump to over 55% of companies facing these shortages, primarily as a result of Canada's aging demographics.

Simply put, without more skilled trade workers, Canadian companies will struggle to create innovative products and remain globally competitive. As a result of these significant economic concerns of labour and skill shortages, CME and our members have been very supportive of the government's efforts on immigration reform, temporary foreign worker program changes, and foreign skilled trade worker programs.

However, while the increase in the skill level and supply of foreign workers is essential, Canada will not address the significant labour market challenges we face today with foreign workers alone. We must also significantly increase the size and the skill level of the domestic labour force.

One of the largest challenges Canada faces in this regard is actually not the apprenticeship program itself; it is getting youth engaged in the skilled trades in the first place. In every region of the country there's a major challenge in getting youth interested in skilled trades and in seeing the trades as an economic opportunity as a whole.

There are a variety of reasons for this challenge; however, a primary factor is a lack of technical education in elementary and high schools across the country, as well as how our youth are mentored in education and in their career choices. Elementary and high school students today in almost all provinces have no exposure to the trades. At one point not that long ago, shop and other skilled trades were taught beginning in grade 7 and continued on through grade 12. This exposure to technical trades would engage youth in the possibility of careers in the trades.

Following high school, technical colleges would be a natural next step for students, which would become a primary feeder system for both industry and the apprenticeship programs across the country. Today most shop programs, as well as the technical and vocational schools, have closed across the country. Many youth are no longer exposed to the skilled trades or job opportunities in the skill sets in demand by industry across the country. Getting kids into technical trades is a first step to address these challenges faced by the Canadian economy to grow the size of the skilled labour pool and increase the number of youth in apprenticeship programs.

As a first step in this, industry, labour, and all levels of government must work much more closely together to refocus their efforts on the education system and ensure students are getting the exposure and necessary information about the jobs available in the trades and the steps necessary to begin a career.

Currently, CME runs programs in both Quebec and Manitoba with this as an objective. The programs are designed to link high school students with local manufacturers to show students the types of jobs that are available in modern advanced manufacturing. Students spend up to a week during the school year with local industry, and industry provides guidance and mentorship as to the appropriate apprenticeship or technical training required from students to obtain the jobs available.

As a result, industry has seen an increase in the number of youth engaged in the skilled trades in these jurisdictions. These types of programs need to be seriously examined and replicated across Canada to improve the quality and quantity of students engaged in technical skilled trades, as well as the apprenticeship programs as a whole.

In addition to improving the education system to provide a better supply of students in the apprenticeship program, the apprenticeship programs themselves need to be more adaptable and flexible to current realities. Some of the specific recommendations from our members include improving labour market information available to students and apprentices on available jobs across the country in future growth areas. Improved information must be communicated to industry on the benefits of programs like the Red Seal program. Currently, a lot of companies do not know what the program does, what the benefits are, and how they can help their industrial competitiveness by increasing the supply of labour and enhancing labour mobility across Canada.

● (1210)

While largely an area of provincial jurisdiction, the ratios for apprentices must also be examined. Given the skills shortage of labour today, it is very difficult for companies to have sufficient technical masters to be able to train the number of apprentices required. We need to increase the ratio levels while maintaining the safety of the programs themselves.

Specific to the Red Seal program, CME generally agrees with the Red Seal program's own assessment during the review it did last year of how it can improve, especially with the focus on: moving to a more practical and competency-based assessment approach to demonstrate competencies; increasing the consistency for assessment across the trades and across jurisdictions; and fast-tracking challenges of the program, especially foreign workers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss apprenticeship programs in Canada and engaging youth in modern manufacturing workforces.

I look forward to the discussion after the comments.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Wilson.

We will now hear from Mr. Diotte, who represents SaskPower, a fairly large employer in Saskatchewan, particularly in the southeast part of the province, with quite a few employees and a number of trades as well.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Mr. Jim Diotte (Vice-President, Human Resources, Safety and Environment, SaskPower): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee. My perspective will be that of a company that's working in an area in the country that's experiencing some fairly significant growth. I would suggest we're at the forefront of that challenge for skilled trades and recruiting the talent that's required for us to be able to support the growth in the province.

Just by way of background, SaskPower is a crown corporation. We employ about 3,000 employees in 71 different communities across the province of Saskatchewan. We operate coal, hydro, gas, and wind facilities. We are a completely integrated utility so we generate electricity and do transmission and distribution to the end customer.

From an apprenticeship perspective, we focus on four main areas. The biggest one by far would be our power line technicians. Those would be the folks who climb the poles and connect the power lines across the province. We also have electrician apprentices, industrial mechanics, and instrument technicians. In the past we had welder apprenticeship programs as well, but we recently discontinued that apprenticeship program.

The bulk of our apprenticeship focus is on that power line technician group. We currently have 72 apprentices. They go through a four-year program. We realized we really needed to focus on marketing this program. It's not as commonly understood or as well known as some of the other traditional trades, but obviously is very important to our business. We particularly wanted to make sure we were on the radar of our aboriginal community. We felt that we had an under-representation of aboriginals in our apprenticeship program and in our line trade and we went about correcting that. We employ a sourcing consultant who's strictly focused on that group. We've targeted the youth in our aboriginal communities, and we're very pleased with the success that we've had in terms of increasing the representation of aboriginals in that area.

We will receive upwards of 500 applications for apprenticeship PLT, power line technician, programs annually. Over the last four years we've been able to take our representation from 20% to 25%, particularly in that aboriginal group. That's equated over time to our having about 10% of our line trade represented by the aboriginal community, which we feel is very important for us as we try to make sure that our employee set represents the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

The major challenge that we see from a trades perspective is that we have a bit of a perfect storm from a workforce planning perspective. We've had, and have benefited from, a very stable workforce that's very tenured. We know that one-third of our employees are poised to retire in the next five years, which includes a large number of our skilled trades. We are concerned about our ability to replenish that workforce with youth coming into the apprenticeship programs.

While we do primarily recruit from within the province, we also have participated in job fairs across the country and have gone so far as to travel to Ireland to do some recruiting there, particularly for electricians and for power engineers.

The challenge that we see, particularly in a competitive market space, is that there are a number of employers who are continually competing with each other for the same limited pool of resources. We understand that we're going to need to grow. We can't just steal from other companies. We have to grow our own tradespeople.

The one thing we are very much interested in is making sure the programs are in place that support the free flow and movement of talent across the country. We look for the various trades commissions to standardize some of their Red Seal or different trades certificates to make it easier for an employee who is looking for work in Ontario to come to Saskatchewan and assume a trades position.

With that I'll cut off my comments and leave it to the committee for questions.

•(1215)

The Chair: Thank you for that presentation. We will start our first round with Monsieur Lapointe.

[Translation]

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

I would like to thank the witnesses for participating here today. It is very much appreciated.

We have been doing this study for quite some time, and, right across the country, we are always hearing the same topics. For example, we hear about our aging human resources. In 5 or 10 years' time, we will have to have found replacements.

Mr. Diotte, I appreciated the comments you made at the end of your presentation. You said that mobility would not resolve everything given that, in the case of a general economic boom in Canada, everyone would be fighting over the same individuals. So there is no miracle solution as far as that is concerned. We do need to ensure some flexibility but that may not be what resolves the urgent problems. When our committee visited the west, we saw communities with populations of barely 30,000 individuals that needed to staff 7,000 jobs. So the need is urgent.

Earlier we heard from representatives of the German Department of Education and they told us that people began trade training at the age of 16 or 17 and that the industry played a very important role. The people from industry participate actively. They provide guidance, for example, by explaining that the situation will become critical unless at least 800 electricians are trained over the next 7 years.

Do you have the impression that Saskatchewan and some other provinces are starting to implement a system that includes this level of involvement? I do not want wide-scale intervention, but I do believe that the problem is serious. At one point, we are going to have to make a decision and action will have to be taken.

•(1220)

Mr. Jim Diotte: I can answer as far as Saskatchewan is concerned.

We visit the schools, and through a number of our programs we let students know that there are many job opportunities at SaskPower. We start in secondary schools. This is very important to us. We want students to have a choice.

However, there is a problem.

[English]

Are the schools preparing the students to pursue these jobs?

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: So there is a challenge on that front?

Mr. Jim Diotte: Yes, I believe so. At SaskPower we've started

[English]

a chair with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina to help promote their power engineering programs.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe: Those are university studies, but when it comes to skilled trades, we could start much earlier.

Mr. Jim Diotte: Yes, you're right.

Mr. François Lapointe: If I understand correctly, the shortage of technicians is the critical problem. However, for the time being, in most provinces, there still isn't close collaboration with the institutions.

[English]

Mr. Mathew Wilson: I can't answer on behalf of any one company, but I'll tell you about a couple of examples.

The local businesses and local industry right across the country are very interested in working with the schools, whether it's at the high school level or any other level of education. Wherever they can, they do work with them, but there is a real disconnect, either as a result of provincial education bodies or regional education bodies, or as a result of the universities and colleges trying to set themselves a global benchmark instead of trying to help the local industries.

We know in some cases, for example, that the groups of companies have had to come together to create their own colleges or technical institutions to be able to train the next generation of students. I know it's happening in British Columbia in the forestry industry, and in northern Alberta with the oil and gas industry, and I'm sure there are others across the country as well.

There are some good examples as well where colleges and universities, but specifically colleges, are working with the local high schools as well as the industry to try to create that integrated approach, to mentor kids through it. But they're so few and far between, the challenges are so great, and the complaints are greater, unfortunately, than the exceptions where there are some good programs going on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: So there is room for improvement.

When we travelled out west, in Fort McMurray for example, people from the social sector rather than the industrial sector told us that the problem was not that young people were not interested in working where there are mining activities, but that the reason was that there is a lack of housing cooperatives and no basic public transit system.

Even if someone is offered a job that pays \$30 an hour and requires little training, working in that location will be very costly for the person. Since the living costs are very high, even having a good salary does not make the job profitable. These people from the social sector seemed to believe that this has become a problem.

• (1225)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Lapointe.

The time is up, but we'll let each of you respond to that question if you wish.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jim Diotte: This problem isn't unique to Fort McMurray. The same thing is happening in southern Saskatchewan. Indeed, in Estevan, there are not a lot of places for young people to live. This is a sizable problem.

[*English*]

Mr. Mathew Wilson: It's the same thing if you look at some of the mine development operations in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's exactly the same problem. This isn't isolated, certainly, to Alberta or the Fort McMurray area; it's a problem right across the country.

The other problem with that, which we're certainly seeing in Alberta, is that you get high school students who are coming out at 17 and 18 years of age with the promise of a job earning \$80,000 or \$90,000 or more a year. What ends up happening is they're unqualified, really, for much beyond general labour in the oil sands. They have very limited skills. Over a number of years it looks really good, and they're making all this money. They go from living in their parents' basement to making \$100,000 a year. But there's really a limited growth potential for them there. They don't have the education or the background to get into a lot of the apprenticeship programs and a lot of the skilled trades. There's that side of the problem as well. Certainly I've seen much more of that problem in Alberta, and to some degree in Saskatchewan, than in other places in the country, but there's a definite problem.

The Chair: Thank you for that exchange.

Mr. François Lapointe: It's a really important issue.

The Chair: If it's really important—

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: I didn't mean to imply that there is a specific problem in Fort McMurray. Witnesses have talked to us about this subject, but it is not a problem unique to Fort McMurray.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right.

Just for the record, the committee did visit Estevan, my home town, and I can verify from personal knowledge and experience that what you say is absolutely right when it comes to a housing shortage.

We'll move to Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

I sense Mr. Lapointe's uneasiness in talking about Fort McMurray and his party's views on the oil sands, but we won't go there.

Mr. Wilson, you talked about the elimination of any kind of trades curriculum, at least in Ontario. We're old enough to have grown up and had the trades in grade 7 and such. Those were eliminated for whatever reason.

Is your organization doing what it can to lobby the provincial government to reinstitute trades training at an early age in elementary school? Are you doing that?

Mr. Mathew Wilson: We're working, obviously, with the provincial government to increase the awareness of the absolute necessity of reinstating these things in Ontario, but again, this isn't just an Ontario problem; it's right across the country.

We're also trying to work with them to introduce programs like the ones we're running in Manitoba and in Quebec, where the technical trades training can take place inside the industrial complex of the province itself, but it has to be done in conjunction with the education system or it doesn't work.

The third thing we're doing, actually, is working with local groups and companies. We're starting in the London area, where there are some high schools that are trying to reintroduce the shop programs and technical trades training. We're trying to get our members to give direct support to the local high schools so that they can provide some of the technology and some of the machining and equipment and things like that which the students need, and then to also bring the students right in.

We are trying to do that, but it's a very small piece of what the real problem is. We're working on it. We can obviously do more, but it is something we're working on for sure in Ontario.

Mr. Phil McColeman: For a moment place yourself in a legislator's position at the federal level. What can the federal government do when provinces set up barriers, not only to curriculum alternatives that have come full circle, I would suggest? We are sitting here as federal legislators. We could perhaps incent industry to do their part, but our hands are tied. I see it as a larger cultural shift that's happened over time, perhaps in a generation, which has created the pickle we're in now and which has to be shifted back.

What do you think the federal government could do to change that cultural orientation that has happened back to perhaps where it should be? As we heard with Germany, it's been in their culture since the 1600s. Being in the trades is actually looked upon as a badge of honour. They don't say, "Stay away from the trades, son, because it's better to get a liberal arts degree or an undergraduate degree", which is, I think, the culture of my generation. We did that to our kids. Perhaps we still do it, and we need to shift it back. What can we do?

• (1230)

Mr. Mathew Wilson: I know it is a difficult thing, obviously. You're limited by the Constitution and a whole bunch of other political realities, but there are a couple of things you could do.

First, HRSDC plays a significant role in terms of labour market issues across Canada and informing people about what's going on. There is a role at a bureaucratic level to have a better understanding of labour market realities, educating the different provinces about what's going on, and trying to be a coordinator of what really is happening in the real world.

A lot of times there's a disconnect between industry and government as well as, and we talked about it before, between industry and the education system. There is a role for the federal government to play in terms of coordination.

There's another thing that helps an awful lot. When the federal government takes a leadership role in something, even if it's outside its specific jurisdiction, it can have a lot of influence on public opinion as well as provincial political opinion in terms of where things are going.

I've heard the Prime Minister speak on skills issues quite a bit. It was a big preoccupation of his when we met with him before. I know it is an issue for the government as a whole and not just one party. It is something in which there is a strong role for the government to play in terms of promoting the skills, and the needs, and the economic realities of not backfilling where the gap is today, in the same way that Germany has.

There are obviously ways, and you mentioned incentivizing industry. You can do some of that stuff, but there is more of a moral or a public role that the federal government could play in terms of coordinating and promoting these things, as well.

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

Mr. Diotte, do you wish to comment? You're okay. All right.

We'll move to Madame Boutin-Sweet.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. Wilson, you spoke about a disconnect. You also mentioned earlier that industry may not have enough information about apprenticeship programs.

The programs also have to be adapted to continually changing needs. However, information is necessary to do so. Unfortunately, more than one source of information has been lost recently. The sectoral councils offered a personalized service but, sadly, basic funding will be terminated next month.

There is also the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, or SLID, which was part of Statistics Canada's long-form census. That has also disappeared. This study indicated long-term income fluctuations. This study tracked people over 20 or so years.

Where can you go now to get information to find out, for example, which programs meet workers' needs? I'm not just talking about the industry side, but also the workers.

[English]

Mr. Mathew Wilson: That's a tough one. There probably are things that can be done through groups like CME and other associations that represent a broad base of industry, surveying our members and things like that. I'm not sure what other sources of information StatCan and HRSDC and other places collect information from, what they have, what's available in terms of analysis of what maybe has changed over the last couple of years and what will be changing.

I know that 35 or 37 sector groups looked at different aspects of it. I don't want to criticize any one group or promote what any one group did. Let's just say there were some groups that did some really good things and provided a lot of really useful information on different sectors, but out of the 35, there were very few that provided information that industry used. It was not done as effectively as it probably should have been. The information that was available at a lot of those different sector groups wasn't really up to what industry needs. or obviously what the government required.

I still think, from my understanding anyway, that at HRSDC and from what's going on in the sector groups, there's still going to be opportunity for specific industry studies. It's just not going to be providing the base funding for those groups to operate and exist just to exist.

Again, I don't want to get into what's coming or what's going. I'm not really sure about some of the details. But it probably had some room for improvement, even it remained in the old system. Maybe that's the....

I don't know if you know, Jim. You're avoiding all this.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: My next question is for you, Mr. Diotte.

You talked about programs and focusing on aboriginal groups. As we know, it is the fastest growing population group. They also have their own culture. Those who worked were often Mohawks. They worked in high-rise buildings. The lineworker trade might be a good idea.

I would like to know how you approach training aboriginal workers. Is the training adapted to their culture? Is it offered in aboriginal villages or in major cities?

Mr. Jim Diotte: In our case, it depends where we're looking for workers. We have a hydroelectric power plant in Sandy Bay in the north of Saskatchewan, bordering with Manitoba. An aboriginal community lives there. We visited a secondary school to offer four young people the opportunity to work in different positions at our hydroelectric power plant for one year. The goal was to help them decide what they wanted to do at the end of their studies. In our opinion, we need more than just hydro line technicians. It also depends in what community we're looking for workers.

You asked me if our programs are adapted to their culture. Not really. However, those who work in Island Falls all come from the same place and the same community.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that exchange. Your time is up.

Mr. Shory, you don't need to use all your time; we need to quit a little early. You're next on the list, so go ahead. I'm not sure if Mr. Cuzner will have some questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Shory, and then we'll conclude with Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, witnesses, for being here today.

Earlier we were hearing from German witnesses, where with a population of approximately 82 million, youth unemployment is 8% or so. If we compare that with Canada, with a population of 34 million, I read a TD Economics article recently that said our youth unemployment is above 14%. It said that the youth unemployment in Canada will cost the Canadian economy \$23 billion. I agree with their logic when they talk about why it is \$23 billion. The economic impact is not just related to lost wages, but it also includes the lost productivity by those individuals. The crime rate definitely increases as well. The potential is there, and we can use all the wealth.

We have been hearing from all kinds of witnesses. One thing is that number one, our government has initiated some programs for employers and also for the youth apprentices to give them some incentive to join the program. Where is the gap? It seems there are not as many programs available for the youth on the one hand, by the private sector, I would say. On the other hand, the youth drop out of a lot of the trade apprenticeships they join. What is the reason?

• (1240)

Mr. Mathew Wilson: I'll begin with the comparison between Germany and Canada, just as a starting point.

Our education systems and our linkages between employers, unions, government, and the education system are fundamentally different. The way unions and industry work together to kind of set the agenda with local educators makes a huge difference in terms of how students go through the system.

It's very much more a hands-on system, where students beginning at 15 or 16 years of age are basically brought in to be, I don't want to say "apprentices", but kind of young apprentices in manufacturing or different business environments. It's very difficult for kids to even get into post-secondary education unless they have the support or sponsorship of a company. It's a very different system from what we have here.

I think it would be quite the transformational change if we were suggesting that Canada would accept a similar type of program. It also probably directly reflects the unemployment rate, where there is a much greater linkage between schools, universities, and employment. The linkage between them is much different.

The challenge that a lot of Canadian companies have, in looking at the local markets and employment rate, is that a lot of times it's not that they don't want to hire the youth. It's trying to find the youth who will actually show up on time, do the job, not complain about it, and show up sober, which is something that...

You don't like to joke about it, but it is a reality. I think times have changed now, compared with what it was like 20 or so years ago. I think there are some realities.

Again, when we survey our members and we talk to our members about what their priorities are, they always want to hire local. They like hiring youth, because they can bring them into their system and bring them along in the way they want them to work, but it is very difficult to get the commitment from the students and the youth to be able to do those things. It's a bit on both sides.

As to how we change that, again, this goes back to the societal challenges we have that we need to all work on together.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

Thank you, Mr. Shory.

We'll conclude with Mr. Cuzner.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I'll be as quick as I can.

Thank you to both of you for being here today.

Mr. Diotte, I want to thank you on behalf of the committee for the great hospitality we got with SaskPower when we were in Estevan.

Mr. Wilson, if there are a couple of your companies or a couple of your members who really have this down pat, who are doing good work, who are having success in this, perhaps you could elaborate on that. What are some of those companies that are doing it really well?

One of the problems we heard was the apprehension on the part of some companies to invest in an employee when once they're trained, they're gone. Are the companies who are having success looking for a commitment post-journeyman or something? Are they looking at those caveats?

Maybe you could respond to that, and then I have a quick question for Mr. Diotte as well.

Mr. Mathew Wilson: Rather than picking out any one company... You kind of hit a good point, though, in the conversation. The companies that are having successes tend to be the ones that are larger and have a lot more resources. The companies that struggle in terms of bringing in apprentices, bringing in youth, and keeping them for the long term are typically the smaller companies with a lot less resources. They have less ability to connect with local institutions, whether that be at the high school or the college and university levels. That really is where a lot of the challenges lie.

You could look at companies like Bombardier, for example, if you want to name a specific company. They do a fantastic job connecting with the local education systems, both upstream and down, and then bringing the individuals along and mentoring them through their system. But if you went to Newfoundland, for example, and found an SME with 20 employees, that would be on a very different scale, with very different abilities.

The larger companies—whether that's typically the large global OEMs, and including, I would assume, companies like SaskPower—have a lot easier ability to have the full range of services available and have a lot easier time bringing them in. Plus they have the brand name recognition that kids will be drawn to. It's a lot different when you start talking about smaller companies. That's where a lot of the challenges are, but it's also where a lot of the employment is.

I hope that helps.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: That's good. I do appreciate that.

Mr. Diotte, when you take in linemen, let's say, are they coming in raw or are you taking them in from accredited training institutions where they have taken a lineman's course?

• (1245)

Mr. Jim Diotte: Typically, they come in raw. We'll train them right from when they get out of high school—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: —the way you want them trained. With the classroom time, would they go for a period of time with classroom training?

Mr. Jim Diotte: It's a four-year program where they'll do some work—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Is it integrated, or is it in the field and then in the classroom?

Mr. Jim Diotte: It's in the field and in the classroom, yes.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Do they maintain an income stream from SaskPower? There's no EI or anything like that.

Mr. Jim Diotte: No.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Great. That would make sense. The other deterrent we heard about was if an apprentice has to go back to school, the delay in getting EI benefits.

The last point is about the pay scale. Are you seeing that as any kind of a detriment? Now you can get work in a lot of places in the west. I've got a son who's making \$30 an hour as a labourer right now. He's using his arts degree to shovel snow in Fort McMurray. Then there are guys who are going back to take trades, and they start off at \$18 an hour in the first year. Do you hear any reflection on the pay scale?

Mr. Jim Diotte: We are definitely seeing that. It is causing a bit of a challenge for us in terms of attracting youth to the trades jobs, when they can make very good money and not have to go through the hassle of that education. Where there's growth, there's opportunity, and where there's opportunity, it's a generation that's not afraid to move.

SaskPower benefited greatly from the last generation of employees. We had less than a 2% attrition rate for 30 years. Once you joined SaskPower, you stayed until you retired. We're trying to come to grips with a very different workforce in the future than we've benefited from in the past, and it's causing us to really rethink a lot of these programs that we're talking about with you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cuzner. Your point was well made.

We'd like to thank both of you for presenting, and answering questions.

We're going to suspend for a brief moment. I'd ask all the members to remain at the table because we have some committee business to deal with.

The witnesses are free to go. Once again, thank you very much for presenting.

I might also mention for the purposes of the committee that the clerk reminds me that she would like to receive the submission of witnesses for the next study by February 14, which would be next Thursday. It's a week from this Friday, just before the break week, so if you could put your mind towards that, that would be good.

I think the witnesses have left, and their staff I would imagine are leaving. While they're doing that, I might mention to the committee that there is a motion that was proposed for consideration by Mr. Cleary. As you can see, he's not here, but with unanimous consent, we can proceed, or the member who's valiantly substituting for him can move the motion. What I'd probably do is ask if there is consent to proceed with the motion as it is. Seeing no objection, I don't see it as necessary for you to move the motion, although you could have, so the motion—

Mr. Mayes, do you have a point?

Mr. Colin Mayes: Before we get into the motion, could we move in camera? The reason for this request is that the motion deals with a subject that is currently in a class action. So just to give freedom to the committee members to speak openly about the issue, I think it would be wise to move in camera. If there's a wish to bring the motion out in public after the discussion, I would have no problem with that, but right now I think it would be wise to deal with this in camera.

The Chair: There are a couple of points. Number one, the motion is on the floor without it having been moved by Mr. Morin. I understand that the motion to move in camera is not debatable, but a certain amount of explanation obviously is something that I generally allow, to some measure, just to get a feel for where we're going with this. But I understand it's not debatable so the point would be to take a vote on it.

Did you have a matter of debate?

•(1250)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Just for the purpose of clarification, I appreciate what you're saying about the matter being before the courts, but the motion clearly just asks for the minister to appear so that we can question her about the breach of privacy.

The Chair: Okay, hold on. We're not going to get into a debate on this thing. We'll deal with the motion by having a recorded vote on it.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: We'll suspend long enough to go in camera, and then we'll proceed.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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