



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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

HUMA • NUMBER 065 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 7, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Ed Komarnicki

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

Thursday, February 7, 2013

• (1105)

[English]

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

We'll get the meeting started. We are continuing our study of economic opportunities for young apprentices.

We're happy to have Lambert Opula here this morning. I'll try to give the organization name: *Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre pour personnes immigrantes (CAMO-PI)*. We will hear from you. You'll be able to make a presentation. Please speak fairly slowly; we have interpreters to interpret what you're saying, so take your time. We'll certainly be sure that you have enough time to make the presentation.

We will then have questions to you from each of the parties, and we'll conclude close to one o'clock—sorry, that's 12 o'clock; I stand corrected there. Yes, we do have witnesses for the second hour.

With that, you're welcome to start. Go ahead with your presentation.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula (Development Officer, Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre pour personnes immigrantes (CAMO-PI)): Honourable chair of the committee, honourable members of the committee, distinguished guests, CAMO-PI thanks you for the invitation to appear here.

Our organization has been around for 18 years. Its mandate is to participate in partnerships all over Quebec to observe the various practices that help people integrate and, from that, we provide observations and advice on Quebec's strategy for integrating immigrants. This organization was desired by stakeholders in the government, the private sector, the union and the community. That is the basis for carrying out our mandate.

Today we are going to focus on four points: access by young immigrants to information on apprenticeship programs, access of those young people to the programs, what happens during the apprenticeship process, and what happens when they try to get a job after their apprenticeship. I will start with the first point: information on apprenticeship programs.

Young immigrants, who arrive at the end of a long, traumatic process, often face poverty and academic retardation. The impact of this is that they are not always in the kind of living situation where

information promoting apprenticeship programs is made available. It is not always easy for these young people to know what is really going on when a training opportunity arises.

They also live with families that have different traditions than what we know and do in Canada. In the countries they are from, their traditions place a lot of value in long-term studies, considered the only model for social success. But any opportunity for a young person to move towards a short training program is seen by the parents, who often dictate the what their children will do, as going against their values. This often disorients young immigrants when there is an apprenticeship opportunity.

That's why, when it comes to information chains, promoting programs and apprenticeship opportunities, CAMO-PI is recommending that your committee consider communication strategies that target the environments that immigrants live in. In other words, the funding programs and apprenticeship actions should include a component for reaching out to young people in marginalized areas.

In addition to information in disadvantaged areas, we also recommend that funding for the various programs be planned to ensure that proactive activities can be organized so that stakeholders could meet these young people where they live and direct them toward training opportunities.

• (1110)

The second point concerns youth access to these programs. With respect to youth access to the programs, we have noticed that there are some problems related to the significant under-representation of ethnic groups in trades and among the trainers.

Not having people in their ethnic group in a trade means that these young people do not have a model in this area. They are also afraid to jump into the unknown, into a trade that is unknown in their environment, especially when it is a trade they will enter after a short training period, which runs counter to their traditions.

The problem with under-representation of entire groups in certain areas and certain trades is a factor that limits young immigrants when they are interested in apprenticeship programs. I can give the example of Maghrebian communities, which are rare and have a hard time getting into the information technology and communications sectors. This is sort of an unknown world for young people from those communities.

In these fields, there is always a lack of a minimum level of basic skill in the apprenticeship programs. When young people reach the end of the immigration process, they have experienced a lot of problems, and they may not have mastered one of Canada's languages of work. They are then being asked to do an apprenticeship and then go directly into a job. They feel poorly equipped, since they don't have the basic skills. But the apprenticeship programs are supposed to give them just a mastery of the knowhow. Basic skills are ignored.

This situation helps develop a negative perception that young people and the communities have of apprenticeship trades.

As a result, CAMO-PI is proposing that your committee consider the possibility of raising awareness in the sectors concerned—meaning employers—about the fact that apprenticeship is a source for future qualified workers. To do this, when there is a lack of basic skills, it is absolutely essential to find a way to train these people, rather than provide these basic skills. Time and money is lost. So it is a factor that may affect a company's productivity.

We are recommending that the opposite needs to be done. From a demographic perspective, immigration is increasingly seen as a source of future skilled workers, and we will need to invest in and consider the costs of apprenticeship as necessary expenses to guarantee medium- and long-term productivity.

We also recommend that your committee consider the possibility of integrating a minimum of basic skills in the apprenticeship program.

• (1115)

This might help alleviate the negative perception that some communities have toward trades stemming from this type of training. We also think that an effort to expand the list of trades acknowledged under the Red Seal to a certain number of jobs in emerging sectors would also be a way to respond to the concerns of young people, who tend to think that apprenticeship in Canada generally only involves traditional trades.

The third point concerns the situation of young immigrants, as apprentices, during the apprenticeship process. These young people arrive in Canada at the end of a long process that is often traumatic, as we have already mentioned. When families arrive here, they go through some difficult times in the beginning and are marginalized. They don't have enough money. But the fact that community support is very modest, even though these young people are having difficulty, is a factor that discourages them from getting into an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship involves costs, and these people are marginalized, income-wise.

The process that leads to the completion of an apprenticeship program is long. It cannot be any other way, though, because the young person or apprentice needs to be able to master the skills. But these conditions are not very flexible toward young people who are poor. These young people tend to find small jobs to be able to meet their needs. Since the apprenticeship process is fairly long, young people can feel stuck and often give up on training.

We think that these conditions might need to be a little more flexible. For a young person with little income, the fact that there is only one block that can take several weeks is very demanding. That

results in high drop-out rates. In fact, this goes back to the impact of all this on the perception that this route is a way to access the trades. In other words, it generates a negative perception.

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Opula, could we get you to start wrapping up your presentation? We want to leave some time for questions, so please try to wrap it up if you can.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert Opula: Thank you.

To do this, CAMO-PI recommends improving the support given to young apprentices. This support could increase the number of young apprentices who complete the programs.

The last point is access of young apprentices to jobs once they complete their training. We are seeing a sort of distrust or discomfort of some employers with the difference which, in turn, makes it difficult for young people to find a job. The situation is difficult for individuals who have completed training and who are not finding work. Therefore, we recommend that there be a major campaign to convince employers that immigrant apprenticeship is an alternative to education and that diversity is an asset.

To conclude, there is poor coordination between the trades that comply with the provincial standards and the trades eligible for the Red Seal program. For example, landscaping, where the title of the profession in Quebec is worker, whereas under the Red Seal, at the federal level, this standard is for workers and technicians. So it is difficult for a worker in Quebec to find the corresponding trade at the Red Seal level. As a result, there is a sort of a lack of consistency that means that the desired interprovincial mobility is difficult.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll turn now to Madame Boutin-Sweet for the first round of questions.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you, Mr. Opula, for your presentation.

I will start with one of the last points you raised, which was that apprenticeship programs should be more flexible. We have heard many witnesses speak about apprenticeship programs, and we often ask them if the program meets the needs of certain groups in particular. For example, I'm thinking of aboriginal groups, women or persons with a mobility impairment.

You spoke about adapting programs, which would be culturally easier for young immigrants. Do you have any specific suggestions on this for the federal government? I know you work with the provincial government, but do you have any specific suggestions for the federal government?

Mr. Lambert Opula: We suggest breaking up the training period into two or three blocks, which would allow young people who are hired to meet their needs by considering the job opportunity. In a single block, young people go a long time without work, which is very demanding, and they often end up dropping out.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: The training is covered in part by the employment insurance program. But employment insurance cheques sometimes arrive a little late. However, people in the apprenticeship program are dealing with financial problems. Do you think something needs to be changed in the employment insurance program to help these young immigrant apprentices?

Mr. Lambert Opula: Yes.

We said that the employment insurance cheque is low for people who are at this level because they cannot claim to get worthwhile salaries. When they are given only a portion of these salaries, it becomes even more difficult, which often leads them to find other ways to make money, sometimes even illegally. That is why we think that, by breaking up the period, people could overcome that difficulty.

We also think there should be a formula to combine the contribution of the employer and employment insurance. The issue should be examined in depth and the entire situation reviewed. When we are talking about someone who is looking for work, more opportunities need to be made available for young people so that the pool of future labour can remain at the level it was at in years past, given the demographic outlook.

• (1125)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: You spoke about modifying and adapting programs. If I understood correctly, you think that certain groups, including immigration organizations, should perhaps be consulted.

For these programs to be modified adequately, who do you think should be involved in the consultations?

Mr. Lambert Opula: First, there are the groups concerned. In my opinion, there is a problem related to traditions, in my opinion. We should change the perception. Then, there are the stakeholders from the territorial entities where these people live. There are also the funding parties, so the Government of Quebec and the federal entities responsible for this matter. So we are talking about a dialogue involving players from various levels of government and community stakeholders. In my opinion, that is what would make it possible to find more accessible and more inspiring formulas.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: With respect to integration in the work environment, I will give you an example. There is an engineer in my riding who is Iranian. His diplomas were recognized here; that is not the problem. For him, his experience in Canada is the problem. So it is much more than simple work experience.

How could we improve this situation in the workplace and ensure that employers are a little more aware of different cultures?

You spoke about an information campaign, but would it be possible to show employers concretely that people from different cultures have another way of seeing things and that it needs to be taken into consideration?

[English]

The Chair: We'll conclude with the response to your question.

Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: There are two things to consider with that. The first concerns the culture. For that, I suggested an awareness campaign to show employers that immigration will become an asset for renewing the labour force.

There is also the issue of incentives. Employers are generally afraid of anything different. However, when they are offered incentives that have an impact on their company's accounts, they are often tempted. In Quebec, the PRIIME program gives incentives to employers who agree to hire immigrants for the first time and covers mentoring and other fees. In these conditions, some employers are encouraged to hire new immigrants and give them experience.

By applying the same formula at the federal level, the results might be significant. But when a measure is implemented, the players must be given all possible chances to succeed. For example, we launched the IPOP program, which enables professionals from abroad to do an internship in order to have their skills recognized. It's a project that everyone wanted to see carried out, but it doesn't provide enough resources to support the professional associations required to implement it. These professional associations also want a cheque to administer the project that, so far, has not been as successful as we would have liked it to be. If we provided them with the necessary means, this program could seriously improve the possibility for foreign professionals to get this recognition. Then, the PRIIME program could...

• (1130)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Opula.

We'll move now to Mr. Daniel.

Go ahead, please.

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

Thank you for coming to be a witness here.

I want to first get a level of understanding of what we're doing. We've been studying apprenticeships for quite a while, and in Canada, in general people enter into apprenticeship programs at an average age of 26 years.

Is that the same in the new immigrant population, or is it a different average age at which they enter into apprenticeships?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: This is a problem for immigrants. For instance, in the schooling system in Quebec, we are told that secondary schools open their doors to young people at the age of 16 and even 18. However, many of those young people are behind in school when they come to Quebec because of the long immigration process and they are forced to drop out. When they arrive, they are placed in a lower level. They can no longer be with young people in their grade level since they are already older because the immigration process took so long. They are a bit frustrated because they were placed in a lower level and they are ashamed of being cast aside. As a result, they tend to become marginalized.

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: What do you think the average age is for the new immigrants you've been working with who enter the apprenticeship program?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: The average age is between 18 and 24, but in reality those young people are older because of the delay.

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: Right.

In many cases we know that because they start later, the fallout rate is very high. Is it similar or otherwise for the immigrant community you're working with?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: I am sorry, I did not quite hear the question.

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: The question again is.... You can't hear me?

The Chair: Do you have any fallout rates?

Can you choose some other words?

Mr. Joe Daniel: The question is this. Is the fallout rate amongst the immigrant population you're working with about the same as the average for all apprentices around Canada, or is it higher?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: The drop-out rate is the same in the rest of Canada, except that, when we look at the situation in all of Quebec, we see that Montreal's rate is much higher because the city has a very high concentration of immigrants. There are a lot of problems and poverty. So the rate is very high in Montreal.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Joe Daniel: In terms of what the federal government can do to assist and to encourage young people to get into these trades, you mentioned that they already have some preconceived ideas of trades, but there are literally 70 or 80 or hundreds of different trades that they could go into for the Red Seal program. Do you find that they are picking just certain ones? Do they get the information? How can the federal government help in making sure they're well aware of what needs to be done?

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: They are not aware of all the trades that exist. I said that the information was passed around settings that are

far from the social reality of young immigrants. Young people are the potential clients for apprenticeships. We are talking about people who do not want to go to school or university to acquire knowledge or who do not have the ability to do so. In that context, they do not have enough information. The information needs to be channeled and directed to where those young people live to make sure we get them interested. The information needs to be directed to where their parents live to have an impact on their initial convictions.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Daniel.

We'll move to Monsieur Lapointe.

[Translation]

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

You have raised a number of refreshing and interesting points. I would like to examine the issue closely to make sure I understand correctly and we have all the details.

At the very beginning of your presentation, you said that there is challenge at a basic level. I noticed a sort of discrepancy based on your presentation. Many new immigrants are lacking basic skills because they come from a war zone. Perhaps their elementary school was burnt down and closed for eight years. You get the picture.

There is a problem with basic skills, but there is also the perception that, in order to succeed in life, you need to go to university. Do you see what I mean? There is a discrepancy between perception and reality.

Trades programs, which are sort of in the middle, could meet some needs. But from what I understand, the perception of trades that many immigrants have is rather negative. Yet if you come from a Canadian family from the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s or 1970s, we can all relate to those examples. One of my uncles was an electrician and he had a very nice retirement when he was 60. He was an electrician by training and, if I am not mistaken, he had two years of training. That's all.

You said that one of your suggestions is to target immigrant populations by tailoring and promoting the information about programs, and I think it is a great idea. But how do we do that? Do we translate everything in 22 languages? Do we need to explain my uncle's example to people from Mali: "Look, there was this family in 1950 and the father was an electrician. When he was 60, his house was paid off and he had a wonderful life"? We cannot wait 25 years to have a model that is easy to understand for people from Mali or Senegal who now live in Montreal.

How can we make this happen?

Mr. Lambert Opula: We need to do something about the information. The information that we circulate on websites or through organizations such as ACCESS in Quebec, can only be seen by young people who have had a normal progression. When we talk about young people who have problems or who live in marginalized communities, having access to a computer is a privilege. They need guidance to know that they must consult this or that website to get the right information. That does not come easily to them.

As a result, this type of information needs to be channeled towards their communities. For instance, what area do they live in? What type of environment do they live in? Is it low-income housing? Instead of using websites, we must post information in the low-income housing units, in their neighbourhoods, in the places of worship of community organizations and in ethnocultural associations.

• (1140)

Mr. François Lapointe: I understand.

You brought up another interesting idea. From what I understand, we are talking about opening the Red Seal program to trades in new technologies, which could be more appealing to the communities.

Could you provide us with more details about the trades? You could forward your suggestions to the clerk. I find it very interesting.

You have also raised another point and there are two other topics I would like to hear your comments on. We are noticing that trainers from ethnic communities are under-represented. It is a bit like the mystery of the chicken and the egg. Do you think that, despite the fact that we have not had a lot of success with trades among some immigrant groups and if we made an effort, there would be enough trainers from Africa, from Maghreb or other areas who could teach trades? The pool of candidates who can be recruited as trainers must be somewhat of limited.

In terms of integration, do you have any figures as to the integration challenges in rural areas? I have the numbers for some RCMs in my region where efforts have been made to recruit immigrants with trade training, but the retention rate is awfully low. An RCM attracted 12 immigrants living in Montreal to meet very specific needs in manufacturing jobs. Ten of them left the region within three years.

Do you have any figures and perhaps some possible solutions to share with us?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Lapointe.

We'll conclude with your response, Mr. Opula.

I know that there are a lot of questions to address in there, but a relatively short response would be appreciated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert Opula: Let's talk about trainers first. Trainers themselves are a source of information. Their presence enables young people to learn something from them.

Around the world, we have seen that the attendance rate of immigrants goes up when people from other ethnocultural backgrounds are involved in trades. I feel this is one possible solution.

As to rural areas, I am not able to give you any exact numbers. However, I do know that the retention rate is very low, as you pointed out. The problem stems from the fact that, at the outset, when we started to regionalize immigration, we did not think to establish a link between the economic profiles of the regions, meaning the real needs of employers, and the profiles of the immigrants being recruited.

CAMO-PI is proposing to promote micromanagement instead. That means knowing the real needs and recruiting the appropriate people. The trend you have noticed is also a result of the so-called family class immigrants. Individuals recruited as part of efforts to bring families together have not been assessed and, sometimes, they do not have the necessary skills to meet the needs of a specific region. That is why there are gaps. In any event, it is important to know that we just have to deal with that.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Opula.

We'll now move to Mr. Shory.

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

Thank you, Mr. Opula. I like the passion you have toward your work.

I am also an immigrant, Mr. Opula, and I fully understand how important it is to have your previous qualifications recognized. At least there should be a clear path to move on, based on your previous experience and education.

Your organization, CAMO-PI, has established a program to facilitate recognition of trade certificates acquired outside Canada in 22 eligible trades. From your experience, is it a successful program? Do you get anywhere in Quebec with the recognition, or what are the obstacles? I want you to elaborate on all aspects of that program.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert Opula: Thank you.

CAMO-PI has launched a number of initiatives to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials. We have conducted an experiment that led to an integration formula for nurses and registered nursing assistants. This formula was very successful, and is helping to solve the shortage of health care workers in Quebec.

We have also set up a supervision formula for engineers who graduated abroad. This formula was studied jointly with the Faculté Polytechnique of the University of Lubumbashi and AMPE-CITI. The objective was to offer courses to those engineers to increase their chances of passing the Ordre des ingénieurs exam. This project was a success in terms of support and help in passing the exam.

However, once their diplomas are recognized, they still have to put in a lot of effort before they find a job. In this case as well, I feel that we must launch an awareness campaign to help employers understand that, very soon, immigration will become indispensable in maintaining productivity at the same level.

We are working on other formulas. Specifically in Ontario, we have noticed that, when CAMO released its three formulas for engineers, nurses and registered nursing assistants, the province had not yet started to build bridges for those people. However, in the meantime, Ontario has developed 11 bridging programs, whereas we only have three.

In short, I think that it would be beneficial to encourage all the provinces and territories to enhance their support formulas for specific categories of professionals so that their qualifications are recognized.

[English]

Mr. Devinder Shory: Thank you.

You also made a comment about increasing the Red Seal program in new areas. Could you give some examples of what you talked about? We've had the Red Seal program for ages, and it should come up in the emerging areas of industry as well. You were going to touch on that.

I also want to hear something about your hip-hop program.

The Chair: We'll conclude with those remarks, Mr. Opula, if you could. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: I mentioned the support offered to engineers and nurses, but there are also the liberal professions, including accounting, architecture, and so on. Those professions have been dealing with this problem for a very long time. Furthermore, for some time now, some sectors have grown tremendously in Canada, in particular the bio-food industry, biotechnology and aerospace. So we will need to think about extending trades mentorship to those new sectors. I feel that this approach will reflect the interests of young people who are looking in that direction without finding any opportunities.

• (1150)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. Cuzner, do you have a few comments or questions?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): I'll ask two questions, and you can answer them in however much time you want to spend on each.

Some of the concerns that you've brought forward aren't dissimilar to challenges that Canadians across the country are experiencing, such as the attrition rate in apprenticeships because of having to go out and sustain a life and make more money to continue to provide for themselves and their families. That's something that we've heard from other witnesses who aren't necessarily new immigrants.

However, your challenges have another layer of challenge, and I appreciate the line of questioning that my colleague Monsieur Lapointe had put forward with regard to what specifically can be done to address those challenges.

There's a suggestion of training trainers so that there's a cultural sensitivity around the trainers. That idea makes a great deal of sense, but I'd like you to try to eke out... Sometimes presenting the problems suggests a solution. Where do you see the federal role in that?

Then the other question is equally good. It was brought out yesterday, or the last day we had witnesses. The Canadian Association of Manufacturers and Exporters said that they're seeing true success in some of the bigger corporations—for example, Bombardier. They have good success with apprenticeships. Is your

group actively engaged with those bigger organizations or corporations that seem to understand the importance of sustained training? Do you have an ongoing dialogue with some of those bigger corporations that do it well?

I'll let you answer. Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert Opula: Thank you.

I am going to first talk about how the federal government should contribute to finding a solution to those problems.

The federal government could encourage the provinces in their efforts. Perhaps programs could be linked. Instead of setting up programs under which the federal government offers grants to organizations so that they get involved, perhaps there is a way to set up a system so that those stakeholders can first go to the provinces for funding before they receive a complementary federal grant. Incidentally, this system is a way to solve the visibility problem that federal programs have and to add to public opinion the idea that the federal government is using a formula to solve specific problems. I think that the networking idea can be developed.

As you noticed, the idea of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association is real. Bombardier has made a great deal of effort in this area, but when we talk about this problem, we are not talking about the exceptional cases of large corporations. Unlike small and medium-sized businesses, big businesses do not have trouble finding skilled workers. They tend to work in a vacuum, whereas small and medium-sized businesses rely on the efforts of communities since they do not have the means to solve the problem.

That is why our proposals primarily pertain to the majority of employers, meaning small and medium-sized businesses. We are not forgetting what is happening in large corporations. But when they are faced with a problem, they have no qualms about finding solutions in Asia, Iran or elsewhere, and bringing foreign workers here. Small and medium-sized businesses cannot do that alone.

We feel that it is important to take steps to make it easier for employees to have access to small and medium-sized businesses and to find solutions to those problems.

Three years ago, I conducted a study on the recruitment process for skilled workers abroad. The study essentially focused on the aerospace sector.

• (1155)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Opula. We appreciate your presentation and your comments. We'll certainly take them into consideration.

I see that most of the people who are on our second panel have arrived.

I'll suspend for five minutes until we get set up. Thank you.

• (1155)

(Pause)

• (1200)

The Chair: I call the members back to the table.

I'd like to welcome, from the Central Ontario Building Trades, Mr. Reed and Mr. St. John.

From the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Mr. Martin will be here as well. I understand we'll have two presentations.

Mr. Grimshaw will start with his presentation. Then we'll hear from Mr. St. John. We'll then have some alternating questions and answers.

Please proceed relatively slowly, because the interpreters have to be able to interpret what you say.

With that, we'll have Mr. Grimshaw commence.

Mr. John Grimshaw (Executive Secretary Treasurer, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - Construction Council of Ontario): Thank you for this opportunity to share our experience and our views on the important topic of apprenticeship. We welcome the standing committee's interest in this issue and look forward to the publication of your report.

My name is John Grimshaw. I am the executive secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Construction Council of Ontario. The members of the local unions that are affiliated to the council comprise approximately 14,000 journeypersons and apprentices in the electrician trade. The vast majority of the journeypersons hold a Red Seal certification that ensures the recognition of their trade qualification across Canada. We also represent approximately 750 line workers in the high-voltage line trade, and we also represent approximately 400 communications workers.

Let me first share with you our strategy for ensuring that virtually all apprentices in our union successfully complete their apprenticeship.

We estimate that the completion rate for our apprentices is around 90%. The province of Ontario is all I am speaking about; I'm not talking about the country. We understand that the completion rate for other apprentices is between 50% and 60%.

First of all, we need to understand the number one reason apprentices drop out: they are laid off by their employer and are unable to get a job with another contractor who wants to hire an apprentice at the same level of training as theirs. In our union, we have a system that overcomes this problem. Each of our 11 local unions operates, in full partnership with employers, a joint apprenticeship committee. This committee, not individual employers, formally sponsors each apprentice. The union can dispatch an apprentice to any of the more than 800 employers that have signed a collective agreement with our union. In this way, if an apprentice is laid off by one employer, he or she can be reassigned to another employer, provided, of course, that there is work to be done.

In the construction industry, this system of sponsorship by a joint committee is far superior to sponsorship by an individual employer. The joint committee system removes most of the risk that an apprenticeship will be interrupted by a long spell of unemployment. In addition to this, an apprentice can receive a traveller's card that allows him or her to obtain work in any of our union's locals

anywhere in Canada. Many apprentices, as well as journeypersons, do this.

The second important point we need to understand is that most young workers do not enter an apprenticeship immediately after high school. In Ontario, the average age of an apprentice in the electrician trade, according to our college of trades, is 28. That means that there is often a considerable gap between the time when young workers finish high school and when they start their apprenticeship training. Some of the math and science skills learned in high school may have eroded, as well as some of the classroom learning skills. Those skills, however, are critically important in our trade. To be a competent electrician requires a solid foundation in trade math to understand the formulas that are central to a large portion of electrical work.

In our union we provide significant additional support to our apprentices. For example, in our Toronto local this support includes 13 weeks of compulsory Saturday school to cover key topics in the trade, so as to better prepare our apprentices to succeed when they go to trade school at a community college; an additional 34 hours of compulsory training on safe working procedures; and regular meetings between the apprentice and representatives from the joint committee to ensure that the apprentice is getting the support he or she needs and is also getting the practice experience he or she is supposed to get.

Most of our other locals—for example, my own Hamilton local—provide similar support to apprentices. This support is absolutely fundamental to achieving a high rate of successful completion. The absence of this support is another reason that the completion rate is so low in some segments of the electrical contracting industry.

In northwestern Ontario, our local union operates a special program for first nations young workers to bring their educational standards up to the level that is required for success in one of our apprenticeships. Over the last five years, our Thunder Bay local has graduated 30 young first nations workers from this program. They have gone on to be successful apprentices, and many have now completed their training. Without that initial support and then the ongoing support that all apprentices in our union receive, there is no way that many of these young first nations workers would have succeeded in their training.

The third point we need to understand about completion rates is that successful completion requires a joint investment: both the apprentice and the employer have to be committed to the successful completion the apprentice's training.

● (1205)

In the system that our union runs with our employers, that joint investment is a given. The joint committee selects, sponsors, and meets with the apprentices to ensure that they are taking both the courses that we require and also their trade school courses. The joint committee also meets with the apprentices to confirm that they are getting full exposure to all facets of the trade when they are on the job.

What is true for our union and our employers is not always true of other employers. There are many employers who see apprentices only as a source of low-cost labour. Those employers have no intention of hiring the apprentice when he or she completes training, and indeed they don't care whether he or she completes the training: as long as they have not completed their training, they are cheaper. Quite often those types of employers also make no effort to expose the apprentice to all facets of the trade. It is not surprising that so many apprentices drop out or fail their trade school examinations in that environment.

That brings me to federal programs to support apprenticeship.

Grants or tax subsidies to employers are a useful incentive. We support them. However, and this is a key point, those grants or subsidies should be back-end loaded: the employer should receive a grant or subsidy when the apprentice successfully completes different stages of the apprenticeship, and the amount of support should increase in the latter stages of the apprenticeship.

The current grant and subsidy programs give opportunistic employers an incentive to churn first- and second-year apprentices through their workforce without ever actually investing in their training or committing to support them through to completion. Economics still works. When you subsidize bad behaviour, you will get more of it, and that is precisely what is happening.

It is easy to fix: reconfigure the support you give to employers so that they receive increasing amounts of support as the apprentice completes each stage of his or her training.

The fourth point I want to make pertains to changes in policy that have had a negative effect. There are two that are relevant.

The first goes back to the mid-1990s. Historically, when apprentices left their jobs to go to trade school for eight weeks, they received eight weeks of EI benefits. As you know, that was changed so that apprentices, like any other unemployed worker, had a two-week waiting period before EI benefits commenced, so instead of receiving eight weeks of EI wage replacement benefits, they now receive only six weeks. I want to urge you to take a look at this issue again. Young workers do not save their money. The prospect of going for two weeks without any income is inevitably a deterrent to some young workers and discourages them from going to trade school. As a result, they abandon their apprenticeship training, and the subsidy that was paid to the employer is completely wasted.

The second policy change—I realize it is not a federal responsibility—is that in Ontario, the provincial government allowed the colleges to impose a tuition charge on apprentices. At present, that fee is \$400 for each eight-week session of trade school. The combined effect of eliminating two weeks of EI benefits and adding a tuition charge has been to significantly increase the cost of training that must be borne by an apprentice. Again, I think economics still works. When you raise the price of something, you will get less of it. When you raise the price of going to trade school, you will inevitably get fewer apprentices completing their training.

You have to acknowledge that there is a tension, if not a contradiction, between our aspirations and our policies. On the one hand, we are all anxious about the large number of apprentices who do not complete their training. On the other hand, the subsidies to

employers encourage employers to churn first- and second-year apprentices through their workforce but give employers no incentive to invest in the apprentice's successful completion of his or her training. At the same time, joint committees that invest substantial resources in supporting apprentices receive little or no support for their work. Then, to compound the problem, other changes in policy have significantly raised the cost to an apprentice of completing his or her training.

We need more consistency between our aspirations and our policies. We sincerely hope that you will address this problem.

Thanks again. If you have any questions, I would be pleased to provide you with answers.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation.

We will move to Mr. St. John. Go ahead.

Mr. James St. John (Business Manager, Director, Hammer Heads Program, Central Ontario Building Trades): Thank you. It's a pleasure to be with the committee today.

My name is James St. John. I'm the business manager of the Central Ontario Building Trades, as well as the director of Hammer Heads. Along with me today is Peter Reed, one of the business agents of the Central Ontario Building Trades and also the field representative of Hammer Heads. We have one of our affiliate managers, Steve Martin, here also; he is the business manager of the IBEW Local 353.

The Central Ontario Building Trades represents 80,000 men and women working in construction. We developed a program called Hammer Heads in order to interact with the youth in the GTA. We're located in Toronto, essentially the GTA. The geographical area that we cover is essentially from Trenton to Oakville to Parry Sound, so it's a very large area representing, as I said earlier, 80,000 men and women in construction.

We have 26 trade union locals that give us access to state-of-the-art training centres where we're able to engage our local youth. That was one of the key focuses from our program, started by the Youth Challenge Fund. The Youth Challenge Fund put \$51 million into how we could engage youth in a meaningful way to have them start with careers, not necessarily temporary jobs. Out of that, Hammer Heads was first developed.

We're not here looking for any money from the government, which is rare from a lot of the presenters that I'm sure come and sit where we're sitting. We're not looking for money today. One thing we are looking for is help from the government.

I had a meeting this morning on the Hill before I came here. I noticed all the construction. I wondered whether there were any apprenticeship opportunities with the contractor that is doing all that work. I'm not sure if this committee has that answer or not, but I think it's an imperative question. We want to see the government tie infrastructure dollars to apprenticeship opportunities for the youth of our communities. In doing that, there is no cost to the government whatsoever. The cost is really zero to the employers, who are going to need workers to build the renovations or the new buildings that you're constructing through infrastructure dollars. We've created a program whereby we could provide the training and the mentorship for these youth to be engaged fully when completing our program.

The earlier speaker talked about retention and how to engage youth. The youth that we've engaged from our program live in Toronto in 13 priority neighbourhoods. I think we have a lot more troubled neighbourhoods, but for whatever reason, we have only the so-called 13. Our program was initially targeted to engage the youth in these priority neighbourhoods, and we've since expanded it to the under-resourced neighbourhoods of our communities.

We're getting youth who have probably been engaged in gangs, who have not necessarily completed high school, and who have had some difficulties and troubles throughout their lives. We've been successfully engaging this youth and turning their lives around.

One of the goals of Hammer Heads was to make an immediate impact. A lot of the youth that we're targeting had previously been recipients of Ontario Works. In the short duration that our program has been in existence—it's coming up to almost three years now—we've engaged 21 youth from Ontario Works and put them to work as apprentices in our field of construction, thus resulting in savings of \$184,000. Again, there's no cost to the government, yet we've lightened the load of youth who were previously receiving Ontario Works and we have now created taxpaying citizens out of these youth.

We think this model can be duplicated again and again. Obviously we're out of Toronto and the GTA, but a program similar to ours can go across Canada. There's definitely a shortage of youth linking to skilled jobs through apprenticeship. The end gain needs to be ensuring that when we're spending infrastructure dollars, those dollars are being linked to create apprenticeship opportunities for our youth.

We engage 45 youth a year in our 12- to 14-week program. We run it as a boot camp. The youth that we're working with have not been model students and have not necessarily been model citizens, so we run our program very militantly.

• (1215)

A day in the life of our program goes like this: the youth are probably up at 5:00 a.m.; they take public transport to two locations—they need to make their own way to our buses—where we pick them up and drive them to our training centres. They spend the full day learning green technology, getting hands-on training at our state-of-the-art training centres and getting to touch and feel what each of the trades is. We represent 26 different locals that all offer a different trade, a different ability to learn a career. Instead of just telling the youth what they're going to be, we get them in there. They get to

touch it, they get to feel it, and then they get assessed by the professionals, by the trade instructors.

The unions collectively invest \$20 million to \$60 million in training in different parts of Canada. We have state-of-the-art training centres where we train our members. There's no reason why we can't train some of these at-risk youth so they have a meaningful career. Hammer Heads, being in building trades, is able to go through all the various training centres so we can find the right fit for an individual who maybe didn't understand the job of an electrician, or a plumber, or an insulator, or an ironworker, or a rod worker, or a worker in marble and tile, or a labourer. We put them in those environments so they're doing it real time and understanding what a life would be like in that particular trade. We think that's the best way to assess the youth. Not every youth will gravitate to a particular trade, so letting them try the abundance of different trades we represent is very key to what we do.

We also track the youth very carefully. In a short time, we've had 107 participants and 98 graduates. The thing we're most impressed with and most proud of is that after completing our program, five of our youth decided to return to post-secondary education. These are some of the youth from some challenging areas who dropped out of school, and once they got focus and direction, we engaged them to go back to school.

From our 98 graduates, we started 91 apprenticeships. That's 91 youths whose lives we've changed. Retention is key. As John alluded to, to start an apprenticeship is great, but we want to ensure they're finishing their apprenticeship, so in our program we track the youth for their first year with us. We take them to work the first day to introduce them to the employers; then we monitor them at the end of each of the first four weeks, and then monthly after that for the first year, thereby ensuring they are being properly integrated into the system.

We offer a variety of ways to interact with our employers, but dealing with the youth we're dealing with is a challenge. When we first started the program, we specifically dealt with the African diaspora youth. That was our target group, and it still remains our focus. We've expanded that to include aboriginals; we've put seven aboriginals through our program, and they've been very successful. We were able to obtain two GEDs and one grade 12 because education, we believe, as John also alluded to, is a huge part of what we do.

As I mentioned earlier, a day in the life of a Hammer Head in our program goes like this: they're up at 5:00 a.m., they catch a bus to go to the training centre at 6:30, they get there at 7:30, they train all day, and they leave the training centre at four o'clock. Two nights a week we bus them to Frontier College, where they're doing educational upgrading, because a lot of our trades have minimum requirements. An electrician is a prime example: you need grade 12 math, grade 12 English, and grade 12 physics. A lot of the youth we're dealing with obviously don't have these credits, so we work with the youth while they're with our program to ensure that we're upgrading their math and physics to meet the minimum requirements to gain entry into those trades. We think it's going quite well.

We can expand upon that with your help. We need to ensure that we tie infrastructure dollars to apprenticeships. We have the ability to train these youth, but after they complete our program, we need to lengthen the jobs. We change their way of life, but it's imperative that after our 12 weeks and as we're going through when they graduate, we need to link them immediately to an employment opportunity so that we can keep building on the momentum of changing their lives.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you for that presentation. Certainly I see your enthusiasm in what you do, and you certainly invest a lot in each individual. You work with one student at a time. We hear what you're saying, and you had some great comments.

We'll move on to Ms. Charlton. Go ahead, please.

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

Mr. Chair, can you tell me how much time I have?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Ms. Chris Charlton: All right. That's not going to be a ton of time.

I think what I'll do, if you don't mind, is put all of my questions at the same time to both of you, and then you can just take up the time in your responses.

First of all, Mr. St. John, what a program. What an incredible opportunity for taking youth at risk, perhaps, to being youth on the brink of success, and doing that one at a time through an amazing mentorship program. It sounds like a program that ought to be replicated from coast to coast to coast.

I would love to hear your thoughts about how we go about doing that, and I appreciate needing to create the opportunities for apprenticeships through contract compliance. I think that's absolutely essential. Are there other components that the federal government could assist with in trying to grow this program and spread it through other communities?

I also wanted to ask you specifically about creating provisions. I'm using the words "contract compliance". Those aren't your words, but it's trying to ensure that through infrastructure spending, we create opportunities for youth through your program. Are you concerned, as Mr. Grimshaw is, that when we do that, it has to be back-ended so that people don't just bid for contracts and suggest that they will create x number of opportunities—that 10% of the jobs, say, will be

reserved for youth? How do we know they will actually deliver? Do you have thoughts on that? How do we make sure we achieve the goals we're trying to support?

Mr. Grimshaw, I was interested in your comments about retention of apprentices. You talked a bit about EI and the six weeks versus the eight weeks. We've also been hearing from a number of witnesses that one of the key concerns and one of the key barriers to retention is the fact that EI processing is so unbelievably slow right now so that young people in particular aren't getting their money in a timely way, can't survive those intervals, and need to drop out of the apprenticeship programs to try to make a living in some other way. Is that your experience as well?

As you'll recall from some of the work we've done together in a past life when you were in Hamilton, one of the things I've been pushing really hard for is travel and accommodation assistance for people in the building and construction trades so that they can take jobs away from their homes. I think that's crucial for apprentices as well, and I think I did hear you say that some apprentices do accept work in other parts of the country. I wonder whether you think that program needs to be available to apprentices as well.

I'll leave it there for now, but I would love to follow up.

• (1225)

The Chair: Certainly you get about two and a half minutes to do that, but go ahead.

Mr. John Grimshaw: I can say really quickly that happily, I haven't had to collect unemployment insurance for quite a while, but I can remember when I went to trade school, and you're exactly right. Half the time you were there for eight weeks—and for us, sometimes it was ten weeks—and you finally got your unemployment insurance at about week nine. It was two and a half months, and that was for somebody who was not making a whole lot of money to begin with. You have to remember that an apprentice is making 40%, 50%, and 60%, graduating up to 80%, through his first to fifth terms. Especially for a second-year apprentice who isn't making a whole lot of money and may now have a family and have all kinds of outside influences going on, getting EI in a timely manner would be very important.

I don't know how many times, when I sat on a joint apprenticeship committee in another life, that an apprentice would say, "Look, I can't afford to go to school." These are our apprentices; they are making roughly double what a non-union apprentice would make, and they don't have enough money to go to school, so I can imagine what it's like for the other ones. I think it's very often easier to go drive a truck or find a job that's paying more than that is at the time and not mind going through. An apprenticeship, as I said, is an investment.

I know that when I took a job, it was for a small amount of money, but I knew that at the end of the day it would be a valuable career. At the same time, I had friends who were going to sweep the floor in Stelco for twice as much money as I was getting, and it was that much harder to do.

I won't take up any more time on it, but yes, we do like tax breaks too, by the way.

The Chair: Mr. St. John, there were a number of questions posed to you, so would you try to answer those in the minute you have left?

Mr. James St. John: I agree with back-end loading. I think the key, though, is ensuring in the RFP that it speaks to apprenticeship, that the contract won't be awarded unless they have a business plan on how they're going to integrate how many apprentices, how many opportunities are going to be created. We definitely need to have the language.

On the back end, if it's tied to incentives, I agree with what John said about maybe giving the employer some of the money up front, but not giving them the bulk of that money, the incentive to hire an apprentice, until they complete their training. For Hammer Heads specifically, we just want to see the apprenticeship language tied to the RFP so that the developer winning the contract guarantees opportunities to local youth in a meaningful way.

With our program, we're slowly being tied to the Pan Am Games. They're trying to deal with some of the African diaspora diversity issues and they want to ensure it's open to different demographics, so they've reached out to us. We think this could be done on every single infrastructure project when it comes to spending dollars, and not just in construction: this should be across the board. If we're investing and rebuilding or revitalizing a community, then we want to ensure the people living in that community have an opportunity to gain employment on the work that's happening right in their neighbourhood.

The Chair: Mr. St. John, there's also the question about replicating your program. Maybe you want to answer that one as well, if you could. Your time is up, but we'll let you finish.

Mr. James St. John: Thank you.

We have just patented our program. We think it's one of a kind, but we think with the right help from the government.... It's got to be tied to jobs. We've been very successful in not looking for money in creating opportunities, so we think this could be done 100 percent.

John represents IBEW across the province, and the IBEW fully supports our program, as do all of our other international members belonging to the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council, so my answer is yes. This could totally be done with the support of government ensuring that the contracts are going to contractors who are going to utilize apprenticeships.

• (1230)

The Chair: Mr. Butt is next.

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

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here. Mr. St. John, it sounds as though you and your people are doing some excellent work in encouraging young people to consider the construction trades.

Prior to getting elected, I was the president of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association for 12 years, so I worked very much in the industry. I know you folks well I and appreciate what I think have been some very good partnerships between employers and unions in a number of these programs.

We actually ran a very successful apprenticeship program to train building superintendents. This was a program we started in partnership with the City of Toronto and the Toronto social services department for people who were receiving Ontario Works benefits. It was to retrain them to become building superintendents in our buildings. It was very successful. It was a true partnership, so I'm glad to hear that's your aim as well.

Mr. Grimshaw, you mentioned that your program has a 90% retention success and placement rate, versus 50% or less in other areas. Do you want to tell me again a couple of the specific reasons your program has such a high success rate versus others?

Mr. John Grimshaw: Again, it's about support. There are a lot of things that come into play.

When somebody gets started in our trade, the word on the street is if you become a union apprentice in the electrical trade, there's a very good wage to be had at the end of it all, with benefits and pensions and some security. The attraction is there right up front.

Throughout the whole process, they know they're going to get support. For instance, we talked about a tuition fee. Most of our locals reimburse the tuition fee for that apprentice, provided that they achieve a certain level of academic results.

Books are another expensive thing. We talked about EI coming in late and everything else. On top of that, in Ontario you have a \$400 fee just to go to school, and then in our trade you have to buy another \$300 to \$400 in books. Then you've got to sit there with no money and you're making a low wage anyway, so we support all of that: we make sure they've got their books and we make sure they're going to get their tuition money back.

If they're having problems with their math—and generally the problems are with math and sciences for us—we have tutors for them. We have training centres. We have training directors. We make sure that we tell them to get in here and see us early if you're starting to have problems and you're falling behind. You've got to remember that often people don't start until they're 28, so by the time they go to trade school, they're 30.

By now, most of them have families or they've got bad habits as far as learning goes, and they're thrown into a school environment where they've got eight weeks to get up to speed. They cram everything into you in a very short period of time. There's a lot of information you have to absorb in eight weeks, so if you fall behind in the first week or two, you're not going to make it. It's as simple as that.

Most apprentices, if they don't have the union behind them, are left to their own devices to try to catch up, whereas we have something readily available. All they have to do is pick up the phone and say "Look, I need to talk to somebody here to get me up to speed or get me back on track."

Mr. Brad Butt: Let me get you to comment on what our previous deputant said, because I made a note on this.

He said that one of the difficulties is cramming all the training into eight weeks. Irrespective of the EI issues, which is something I'm sure this committee will look at and make some recommendations on, can we allow people to break up the training into segments? It might allow somebody to take a segment of training and then go and do some work, which may or may not be related to their trade. It would allow them to earn some income and then come back and take another segment and then another segment. It may make the training last longer, but it'll provide some income support at the same time that they're going through an apprenticeship program to then become licensed and regulated within that profession.

Is that doable? Do these apprenticeship programs need to be done in a solid, intensive, 9-to-5, Monday-to-Friday format to be successful, or could you break them up into segments, which would allow somebody to take a couple of weeks of *x* and go and work for a month doing something to earn some income, and then come back and do another three-week segment, and then go and do some work, etc.?

Is that doable? Could you structure a program that way? I'm sure that being a skilled electrician is significant work, and you need to know a lot of things and do a lot of on-the-job training and safety training, etc. Does the nature of the work mean it is just not doable as far as your particular trades are concerned?

• (1235)

The Chair: We'll conclude with your response to that and move to the next questioner, but go ahead.

Mr. John Grimshaw: I can give you real-life examples.

The joint apprenticeship committee that I used to sit on—in a former life I was a business manager for the Hamilton local for electricians—we had approximately 280 apprentices, and we had that problem with getting apprentices to go to school, because of their economic problems and whatnot, so we went with Mohawk College and with our representatives from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and asked if we could set this up somehow for night school for, say, two nights a week. That way the apprentices could still work during the day, could go to night school, and could then come back. Could we could break it up so that, exactly as you said, we could have a week on, a week off, a week on, a week off?

So they tried a couple of those programs. It was a miserable failure to get young people to focus on this, especially if they're working.

They work all day. They might work outside. You're in the apartment building business, so I'm sure you know they get built outside. As a result, you're outside all day and you're cold, especially in the wintertime. Now you've got to go home, grab a bite to eat real quick before you head off down to your local community college, and then sit there for three or four hours to learn something else. What's your retention level? Generally speaking, our experience was it wasn't very good.

Some people were good at it. Some people can work quite well under that environment, but the majority of people in the trades are not scholars. They're not like the kids who go to university and cram and cram and cram. They're used to that lifestyle. Most apprentices don't think along those lines. In the end we had to end the program

because the success rate was terrible, and we ended up forcing them to go into block situations.

Just to be clear, it's not just eight weeks. They go eight weeks one time, and then they go two periods of 10 weeks on top of that, so there's a total of 28 weeks of training.

As I said, my experience with it in our particular group was not very good.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much for that response.

We'll move to Mr. Caron.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for your presentation.

It's actually a very impressive program, and I think a very good example of how unions and employers and builders can actually work together on something that's really constructive and useful.

Youth do their apprenticeship periods, and after that they are able to work. Given the cyclical nature of the work, is it often that these people cannot work 12 months a year? Do they work all year long, or do they sometimes have spells when they can't actually find work?

Mr. Steve Martin (Business Manager, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers - Local 353): I'm the business manager in Toronto. We have 1,700 apprentices at any given time on the go. We're always taking in new apprentices. They're always working.

Mr. Guy Caron: Yes, but once they're finished their apprenticeship, then they go on labour, which is actually—

Mr. Steve Martin: No, they become journeymen. Again, I represent 5,800 journeymen as well.

Mr. Guy Caron: Can they actually find work 12 months a year?

Mr. Steve Martin: Yes, we do about 14 million man-hours a year.

Mr. Guy Caron: Okay, then there is no problem in terms of being able to find work and matching the jobs with—

Mr. Steve Martin: We have 400 employers, and they always have work on the go. Our apprentices are very busy. Our journeymen are very busy taking new starts out of the Hammer Heads program. It's a great opportunity for them. Number one, they end up back in their own neighbourhoods exposing the program to other people who are there, which brings more from the neighbourhood back out again, asking how to keep it going.

You know that a massive amount of building has happened between Oakville and Trenton and up to Parry Sound in the last 10 years. We have probably another 10 years like that. There's a lot of trade opportunity for them.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Now that you have your headphones on, I will continue.

Generally speaking, training falls under provincial jurisdiction, although the federal government can play a role in various programs. As you pointed out, that is the case for a second-language program. However, a program like Hammer Heads in Ontario can also have an equivalent in the other provinces.

What is the current situation in the provinces, particularly in terms of retaining apprentices? Does it vary from province to province? Does every province have a program that is similar to Hammer Heads or to an ideal program? Have the provinces expressed an interest in something like that? I just wanted to have an idea of the equity between the provinces in terms of apprenticeship programs.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. James St. John: The only other program similar to Hammer Heads that I know of is in Vancouver. It's called BladeRunners.

Could this be replicated in other provinces? Most definitely. All of the provinces have building trade unions. Right now it's our building trades that fund Hammer Heads and collectively, in kind, it costs us \$1 million a year to run this program. Those dollars come from us and are spent by us for the youth. There is no question that this could be done in other provinces.

As I said, to my knowledge, there is only one other program that was very similar, and that was BladeRunners. We took that model and expanded upon it to come up with this comprehensive 12-week program that we have right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: From what I understand, as a result of this program, among other things, you feel that Ontario is a step ahead of the other provinces when it comes to construction apprenticeships?

[English]

Mr. James St. John: There is no question. We're still relatively new. We're just in our third year right now, so we're still learning. We're still implementing new ideas. We just added the education component less than a year ago, but we found it made a huge impact, so we're still trying to get our feet under us with what we're doing. We're well on our way, and once we have worked out all the kinks and the bugs, yes, we would like to see this go across all the provinces.

The Chair: You have about half a minute, so if you're okay, we'll just move to the next questioner.

Mr. Guy Caron: Very quickly, was there any involvement of the Government of Ontario in the program?

Mr. James St. John: The government started the program with the \$51 million that was given to the Youth Challenge Fund. We received \$272,000 as a start-up from that, and since then we have received \$100,000 from the MTCU for a pre-apprenticeship aspect. As well, the MTCU aboriginal division gave us a little bit of money to include aboriginals in our program. Aside from that, it has been all paid for by the building trades affiliates.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caron.

We'll move to Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Thank you, gentlemen, for coming in.

It's a fantastic model.

With acronyms I get lost. What is MTCU?

Mr. James St. John: It is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay. On your connection with the province, in the sense that it has the formal responsibility for education—this being part of perhaps the ministry, then—what has been its reaction to your success?

Mr. James St. John: For Hammer Heads specifically, they have been impressed that some of the youth we are dealing with are youth who really haven't been given an opportunity like this in the past, and people are very shocked by our outcomes, especially with the youth that we're targeting. Of our 107 from a priority neighbourhood, 41 were living in Toronto community housing. At every one of our intakes, we try to take a youth out of a shelter and put him or her through our program, so people are impressed that we're able to have the results and success that we are having, considering we are not trying to attract the top youth who did well in school. Essentially, we are going after the opposite youth, and we're still having success.

We're not yet as popular as I want us to be. Hopefully that will come with more success.

Mr. Phil McColeman: I'm more interested in the reaction, just generally speaking, in the unionized and the non-unionized construction industry, in that this appears to be a model that works. It could work inside a union. It could work outside a union environment in many ways. Have you had any feedback from people in the broad cross-section of the construction industry?

Where I come from in the world, the unionized construction industry doesn't play a major role in my community. It's non-unionized. Have you given any thought to how we could make this a model that could work in different environments?

• (1245)

Mr. James St. John: Yes, definitely. One of the things we've been doing is going to the developers. The developers aren't necessarily union or non-union, but the developers want to make an impact in their communities. We've been reaching out to the developers and saying, "Listen, you're going to build a brand new building, and you're going to build a complex over here, so can we tie some apprenticeship opportunities to that?"

The developers want to make an impact, so slowly but surely.... Tridel that has come on board in a big, meaningful way. Concert Properties has come on board in a big, meaningful way. They themselves are writing it into their RFPs for their subcontractors to ensure they're bringing on local youth.

Yes, I think it could go across the board, especially if we can engage not only the government but also the developers. We've been trying to do that on our own.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Are you familiar with the Helmets to Hardhats program?

Mr. James St. John: Very much so.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Tell me how it connects or aligns with what you're doing.

Mr. James St. John: It's very similar. In the Helmets to Hardhats program, people serving in the military and coming out of the military can find a career in construction. Both in the United States and in Canada, the building and construction trades obviously support our veterans, and this is one of the fine ways whereby we can open the doors and have our veterans and people from the military come in and have a secondary career in construction.

It's a model that's very similar to the Hammer Heads program, in which we're dealing with the youth in the same manner and giving them opportunities that aren't readily available for them.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Right.

Now, there was a brief mention of pre-apprenticeship training. How large is that need?

I'll give you an example. In my community, I represent the largest first nation in Canada, the Six Nations of the Grand River. The federal government partnered with the Niagara organized, unionized people, and we started a program called Pipe Dreams. It's directed at aboriginal youth, to get them involved in the trade of welding. It gives them pre-apprenticeship training. They're flowing through about 60 individuals every six months. It gives them a taste of the trade and enables them then to go on to employment in a pre-apprenticeship manner and take their apprenticeship after that.

Do you see that this could be the next logical step for this program, in that if you had the resources, you could bring in larger numbers of people? I say "larger numbers" because, let's face it, the model is fantastic. I ask myself what this could be, potentially: how large could it be?

Mr. John Grimshaw: Can I just comment on that briefly?

I believe you mentioned the Six Nations. With Six Nations' cooperation, we did a program through the Hamilton and Brantford building trades. It was modelled after the Hammer Heads program because we recognized what a great concept it was. We went to the Six Nations and asked them if they had somebody who could work with us, somebody from their youth employment agency that they had set up there.

They actually screened the applicants, and we set it up exactly the same way. They had to come up to a central area to get picked up by a bus. We actually ended up buying them a bus for them to do the next phase of it. They would take them to the different training centres for the different trades—ironworkers, pipefitters, whatever trade it was—and again, it was very successful. These were people who probably would never ever have had this opportunity without that kind of thing.

Could it be done either union or non-union? Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Yes.

Mr. John Grimshaw: The bottom line is that is that the unions tend to be more organized and more coordinated. It's easy for me to call up James or Steve and say, "Look, how about if we get together and do this program?" I don't know that there's that kind of a network—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Grimshaw.

The time is up, but I think Mr. St. John might want to make some comments in respect to that.

• (1250)

Mr. James St. John: Totally.

You know, John and Steve...and actually Peter happens to be an electrician as well. The pre-apprenticeship works for some fields. For our program, we want to give the youth an opportunity to try all the different trades out there so that when they graduate after the 12 weeks, we've had them assessed by the professionals and we've linked them to the trade that best suits them. When their skill sets, their aptitudes, and their mechanical abilities match the right trades, then we can have the retention and success rates that John alluded to.

In our situation, I think it makes absolute sense. A lot of the youth don't understand how many different trades exist. A lot of people don't understand how many trades exist. Giving them the opportunity to try an abundance of trades so that they can find the trade that best suits them—that's perfect, in our world.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cuzner, go ahead.

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

We've heard very worthwhile testimony here today.

Once a tradesperson reaches the Red Seal level, then the degree of mobility across this country is excellent. The trades have come very far over the last number of years in that realm. However, it's been really frustrating; we've heard from employers and from apprentices themselves that while they're going through their apprenticeship, it's really frustrating.

We had a case in Nova Scotia that you're probably aware of. An apprentice had gone out to Alberta, which is not uncommon for Nova Scotians—we're sort of a foreign worker breed ourselves in Cape Breton—and when he came back to Nova Scotia, they wouldn't recognize the hours he'd worked in Alberta. I mean, that had to really frustrate him.

What you guys have, Mr. Grimshaw, in that joint apprenticeship committee is a common sense approach. I think there's great fairness in it. The employers see the merit in it. The apprentices see the merit in it. If you're a Red Seal worker and you're charged with the responsibility of bringing a young guy along as an apprentice, then I'm sure you'd appreciate knowing that this guy knows a certain degree before he lands on the job.

Why can we not take that template, apply it in some kind of a national program, and have a national approach to addressing developing apprentices, trade by trade or whatever? What you guys are doing is good. Could we broaden the scope of that plan?

Mr. John Grimshaw: I don't know why you can't. I'm sure you could do that. It's a matter of organization and being able to put the right parties together in order to do it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Who are the right parties? That's why we're here. This is what we want to get to here. Who are the right parties? Is it the provincial labour ministers? Is it the provincial unions? What role does the federal government play? Can the federal government lead the charge on that? Where does it have to come from?

If it's everybody's problem, then nothing gets done. What we want to do is help this thing along, so how about some advice? Who do we charge this with, and where do we go?

Mr. John Grimshaw: It's a good question, but just from my own experience, money pretty much drives everything. If you start at the top....

I was at a meeting just last week with people from Alberta—from Suncor, Shell, and another one; I don't think it was CNRL, but it was another huge oil sands developer. They were asking the same kinds of questions: how do we get apprentices through? How do we get apprentices to become journeymen?

There's no point in bringing apprentices in if you're not going to have journeymen. That is not going to solve your problem down the road. That might solve your problem for the day or for a week or two, but it's not going to solve your problem, so they are now ensuring that when a contractor gets work, he has to hire so many apprentices.

By the way, the rate in Alberta is one journeyman for two apprentices. On all of those jobs at the tar sands, they said their saturation rate is about 30% of apprentices, so even though they can go two apprentices to one journeyman, their effective rate is approximately three journeymen to one apprentice. Now, I'm talking about the major heavy industrial areas and whatnot, the oil sands and the oil refineries and the upgraders and whatnot. They don't use us only; they use non-union, they used alternative unions, they use whoever to do their work. They are now insisting to all of their employers that they have proper programs to bring apprentices through—and do you know what? As soon as you tell a contractor that they have to do this or they don't get the job, it will happen.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: They'll take note.

Mr. John Grimshaw: It will happen.

As to how the federal government influences that, I really don't have an answer for you. We do it because we recognize the necessity of it. One of our biggest selling points is that we do have qualified people who are ready to go to work, who are safety-trained, who know the latest technologies. That's what we demand of our people, and that's why we're able to get work.

• (1255)

Mr. Steve Martin: On your point about how we get apprentices to be able to move around, the problem we have now is that every province has a different training standard. The only thing that could be done at the federal level is to have the federal government mandate that all of the provincial training has to be done at a certain level, so basically enact the Red Seal program as a federal mandate. Everybody would have to train to the Red Seal level. Then you would have portability of apprentices as well as journeymen, coast to coast.

As you know, construction is cyclical, so it will be busy in Alberta for the next couple of years, and then Saskatchewan will pick up, and then B.C. will go, and then the east coast will go. If you have a province that is loaded up with a ton of apprentices and journeymen who can't go anywhere, how does that solve your problem? We're back again to a shortage at one end of the country and an

overabundance at the other end of the country, and nothing to be able to solve it in between.

The Chair: Thank you. We appreciate that.

I understand Mr. Carmichael has a very short question, and we have a very short period of time, so if he could put his question and if anybody has any closing comments, we'll take those.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Thank you Chair, for my 10 minutes—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Carmichael: First of all, I'm very impressed with the testimony today. I think some of the work you're doing is extremely important. I happen to represent an area in which youth at risk are a significant problem. The apprenticeship program, to me, is one that.... Certainly in my previous career in the automotive industry, we spent a lot of time and money on apprenticeship and development, because those create sustainability for business.

I wonder if you could talk about the Helmets to Hardhats program. You mentioned you had a similar program. Is it an apprenticeship program that you're applying to bring veterans into learning and training in the trade as well?

Mr. James St. John: Definitely.

They are evaluated, and the building trades try to funnel them to whichever one of our affiliates makes the best sense for using some of the previous skill set that they learned in the military and to have them work in that particular trade.

The Chair: Thank you for that response. That's it.

Mr. Reed, did you want to make a comment? If you do, we'll close with a comment from you. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Reed (Business Representative, Field Representative, Hammer Heads, Central Ontario Building Trades): My part of the Hammer Heads program deals a lot with following up with the youth and seeing them in the field. Something that is important to understand is that youth will stumble, and youth will have issues as they go through an apprenticeship or start into a career, as our Hammer Heads do.

Employers, a lot of times, don't have time to understand that and don't care. They could accept the fact that a youth was late or had an issue one day, but the next time it happens, they just cut the youth loose and hire somebody else. They don't have time to stick around, so in our program the follow-ups that James talked about are very important. It's important to go out there and see in real time what happens. If a youth is late once, I can address that with the youth, and it needs to be addressed with the youth to make sure you solve the problem and you don't let it build until the employer just eventually cuts the youth loose.

The first-year mandated follow-ups and interaction with the youth are very important in keeping them on track. We can tell them and teach them to get up early and not to be late and to have a good plan, but you need to ensure that they continue that through the first year so that it becomes a real habit to them. Twelve weeks is great, but you need that year to make sure the habit is formed so that they become good workers and make it in the field.

The Chair: Thank you for that intervention. We certainly appreciated your testimony. The meeting is adjourned.

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

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

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

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

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