



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 079 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 2, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Ed Komarnicki

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

Thursday, May 2, 2013

• (1145)

[English]

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

We have two presenters here with us today: Sarah Anson-Cartwright, director, skills policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce; and Martine Lagacé, associate professor, department of communications, University of Ottawa. I understand you had an appointment that you needed to make, but you've changed that around.

Both witnesses can be with us until 12:30 at the latest, so we'll break somewhere before then.

We appreciate that you're able to do that. We're sorry for the inconvenience in not starting on time.

Go right ahead, then, with your presentation, and after you're both done we'll open it up to questions from each of the parties.

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright (Director, Skills Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce): Thank you very much.

On behalf of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to be here. My name is Sarah Anson-Cartwright, and I'm director of skills policy.

Two and a half years ago, the Canadian Chamber called on Canada to address its aging workforce. Our report was titled, "Canada's Demographic Crunch: Can underrepresented workers save us?" The reality is, we're facing a huge expected exodus from the workforce over the coming decade. Some sectors will be especially hard hit. Several large companies have told us that up to one-third of their employees will be eligible to retire within three to five years' time.

In 2011, we issued a policy brief called "Incenting Seniors To Continue Working", and it offered a range of recommendations, such as pension reforms. Last year our report on Canada's skills crisis highlighted how employers are confronting skills shortages in the face of impending retirements. In short, the Canadian Chamber has been shining the spotlight on older workers and the need to keep them in the workforce as much as possible. I'd like to share today some comments on how employers are retaining older workers and the role of training and continuous learning. I will also mention pension reforms and tax policy to encourage people to continue working.

Older workers have been faring well in the labour market. Last year, the segment of the population aged 55 years and over posted the largest increase in employment. By far the largest increase of all demographic groups was among older women, whose employment surged 5.8% in 2012. Older men fared well too, with their employment levels jumping 4.3%.

Canadians are living longer and healthier lives than ever. This, coupled with the availability of more flexible work arrangements, leaves many older workers with not only the mental and physical capabilities to continue working, but also with the desire and the means. A multi-generational workplace can be immensely valuable to a business. The mature worker provides the knowledge, experience, and history, and the younger generation provides technical expertise.

Business can encourage older workers to remain in the labour force. Employers' interests in older workers are twofold: first, to tap into a pool of potentially available workers, and, second, to benefit from the skills of existing older employees for a longer period, including the opportunity for knowledge transfer between experienced and younger workers.

Older workers want flexibility in their work schedules, according to survey findings in Canada. Business can implement innovative, firm-based work arrangements that are more suited to older workers' lifestyle needs. Flexible work arrangements, such as part-time or part-year schedules, flexible working hours, compressed work weeks, job sharing, telecommuting, home-sourcing, i.e. working from home, and contract work can be valuable tactics to increasing labour force participation.

The Canadian Chamber surveyed chamber members last year, and 84% of the respondents were small businesses. There were 49% of them who said they would allow staff to work part-time or reduced hours as a way of retaining older workers on staff.

Connecting older workers to new job opportunities is the goal of ThirdQuarter. This program originated out of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce and is now being extended to communities elsewhere in the country as a result of increased federal funding. It is an online service with a hands-on approach for this demographic group that is aimed at better matching skills to jobs.

To keep older workers engaged, they may need to learn to keep learning on the job and as they extend their working lives. Many jobs have changed considerably as a result of technology. Employer-supported training for older workers has been increasing since 1991. More older workers received or participated in employer-funded training in 2008, as compared to 1991 and 1993, according to Statistics Canada.

If long-tenured workers lose their jobs, they may need to find new employment. If those workers have low educational attainment, they may need literacy, numeracy, and other essential skills training before they can retrain for another job.

• (1150)

Community colleges can play important roles in combining technical training with essential skills training. This is part of our skills challenge that needs ongoing attention by government.

Many people may need or want to work longer. The pension and tax systems should not penalize them when they do so. The Canadian Chamber supports the recent measures by government to allow those collecting CPP to have their benefits continue uninterrupted if they continue to work.

We also support changes to the OAS program, which will go into effect in July of this year, that allow for the voluntary deferral of OAS pension for up to five years. This will allow Canadians to receive a higher actuarially adjusted annual pension at a later time, making it more attractive for seniors to work longer.

Similarly, the enhancement in the actuarial bonus when CPP benefits are delayed past age 60 removes the previously strong financial incentive to retire early.

We also need to look at Canada's tax system, and in particular marginal effective tax rates, which influence a person's decision to participate in the labour market and the choice between working more and taking more leisure time.

Income-tested tax credits provided to seniors deliver financial benefits, but as these families' incomes rise past prescribed thresholds, many of the public transfers they receive are clawed back. The guaranteed income supplement, for example, contains a clawback provision by which each additional dollar of earnings reduces the benefit received under the program by 50¢. This creates a strong disincentive for seniors to work, because each additional dollar of earned income is effectively taxed back at a rate of 50%.

Canada is now confronting the combination of retirements and skills shortages in our economy. We need to retain and equip every worker with the right incentives and skills to stay employed and productive in the workforce. By focusing on specific, concrete actions by both government and the business community, we can encourage older workers to remain in the labour force and contribute to our prosperity.

I welcome your comments and questions.

Thank you.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that presentation.

We'll now move to Martine Lagacé.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Martine Lagacé (Associate Professor, Department of Communication, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for your invitation.

My name is Martine Lagacé. I am an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Ottawa, but I am a psychologist by training. I am a social psychologist, in other words.

In dealing with the issue of the participation and integration of older workers, I am not going to talk to you about money. But I am going to talk to you about an obstacle that, unfortunately, has not been the subject of a lot of research. But, for twenty years or so, my colleagues and I have identified it as a major obstacle.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Lagacé, could I just get you to slow up a little bit? The translators need to translate, so....

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I'm sorry about that. That's the bad side with a professor.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: All right.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I will slow down the pace a little.

The research that my colleagues and I have been conducting for twenty years or so shows that one of the major obstacles to the participation, integration and retention of older workers in the labour force is the matter of negative age-based stereotypes—I will come back to that—and of flawed beliefs about aging, and specifically aging in the workplace.

My presentation has two objectives. The first is to discuss the problem of ageism and to share with you the results of the research into it. They show that there are major costs to Canadian society because of ageism, costs to older workers in psychological terms and costs to the organizations that have policies that tolerate ageism.

The second part of my presentation will be to provide some thoughts on possible solutions to the problems that ageism causes. That is a major question, of course. How can we put an end to ageism and age-based discrimination in the workplace? We are still having difficulty in the fight against sexism and racism. But with ageism, we are very late in terms of the concrete steps and initiatives that companies have put in place to combat it.

As a researcher, I have realized that ageism has been explored very little, even in the scientific community. If you google the word, you do not find a lot of research. This is the complete opposite of racism and sexism where a lot of progress has been made in the workplace. There are zero tolerance policies against sexism and racism in the workplace, and against other kinds of exclusions. With ageism, that is far from the case.

Let us establish some context. We know that workers in the 45 to 64 age-group currently make up around 40% of the Canadian workforce. As the baby boomers age, we will see that number go up more and more.

However, despite the aging of the Canadian workforce in a demographic sense, we also know very well that workers between the ages of 45 and 64 face significant obstacles to their participation, integration and retention at work. For example, in all OECD countries, we know very well that workers between the ages of 45 and 64 are overrepresented in unemployment statistics, including the statistics for chronic unemployment.

We also know that workers between the ages of 45 and 64 get much less benefit from on-going training than somewhat younger workers. We also know that career development initiatives for workers in that age group are quite rare. Most of the time, managers talk with workers from 50 to 55 about retirement. It is very rare that managers sit down with their 50- to 55-year-old employees and talk about career development and career progression. The discussion is very slanted towards retirement, which contributes to a form of self-exclusion, which I will get to in a few minutes. Slowly but surely, the worker begins to believe that he is no longer useful to the organization and therefore begins, slowly but surely, to prepare to leave it. But the departure is premature.

I would like to stress one aspect today. If there is one effort that could be made in the Canadian workplace, it must absolutely be to get rid of the logic that a premature exit has advantages. There must be a dialogue that revalues work for all Canadians and that particularly values the work and recognizes the value added by workers between the ages of 45 and 64.

The difficulties of integration have been identified. They are tangible, but they go hand in hand with the perceptions of older workers.

• (1200)

For about 20 years, in all the surveys about workers between 45 and 64—including healthcare workers and many members of the Canadian public service—most of them have told us that they have been the target of outmoded beliefs about their age and of negative remarks because of their age. The increasing age in the workforce seemed therefore to bring with it more negative implications than positive ones. Basically, getting old in the workplace seemed to be a problem.

If you look at the research literature on aging in the workplace, you see that the negative, age-based stereotypes have been very well identified. Let me give you some examples. This is not an exhaustive list.

Often people 45, 50 or 55 years old are said to be young, but, in the workplace, a manager will consider that any employee over 45 is heading downhill.

The stereotypes say that a 45- or 50-year-old worker is less productive than a younger one and that his capacity for learning is impaired. So the thinking is that he can no longer adapt to change, especially technological change. A very enduring stereotype is that workers over 50 or 55 are not skilled with new technologies and that their motivation and commitment are also impaired. They are in

decline, basically. It is thought that those workers are more frequently absent than younger ones. That belief is very widespread among managers, and senior managers think that hiring an older worker costs an organization dearly.

For all that, we know that no empirical, scientific study for 20 years has shown any link between productivity, motivation, absenteeism and the like, and increasing age. The relationship between productivity and increasing age, for example, is much more complex than a straight-line link. The relationship between the capacity for learning and increasing age is also complex. If an employer provides the conditions or adapts the workplace, lifelong learning is possible, regardless of a worker's age.

But these stereotypes are insidious. That is where stereotypes get their strength. They are insidious and they are rarely denounced in the workplace. There is often a *laissez-faire* attitude towards stereotypes in the workplace. In psychology, we also know that what we believe and what we think can open the door to how we behave. To be in cognitive consonance, what we believe will be in harmony with the way we act. At that point, it becomes dangerous because the negative beliefs open the door to discriminatory, age-based practices.

At the beginning of the presentation I mentioned that we know that workers of 45 years of age or older are overrepresented in unemployment statistics and that it is very difficult to lose one's job and then find another one at 50. We know that they are less often invited to take part in training and they have fewer career advancement opportunities. We also know that, given equal skills, a worker of 55 is systematically evaluated more negatively than a worker of 35, just because of his age.

My message is a little negative, but I feel that, if we want to think about the question of integration, participation and retention of older workers, we must come to grips with the problem of ageism in the workplace. It exists because it is the extension of an even more negative view of aging in Canadian society. The workplace is a microcosm that is rife with these beliefs.

To find out the negative consequences of ageism in the workplace, we have surveyed a lot of nurses and public servants. It has been shown that workers who feel that they are the target of negative remarks because of age begin quietly to disengage psychologically.

• (1205)

[English]

The Chair: Madame, I'd like to see if I could bring you to your conclusion.

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I'm almost done.

The Chair: You're almost there. All right.

[Translation]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I only have a minute left.

We know that psychological disengagement opens the door to physical disengagement. Ageism has negative consequences to which very little attention is paid. A worker who disengages psychologically then disengages specifically by preparing for a retirement that is not voluntary, but is a reaction to a form of exclusion based on age. That means that workers who are not able to transfer their skills and who leave their familiar surroundings feeling dissatisfied become part of a whole group of discontented retirees. People in that situation will certainly not come back to the workplace, nor will they stay there.

[English]

I apologize for my long statement.

The Chair: I appreciate that you do have a lot yet that you would like to share with this committee, I'm sure. I'm hoping you'll get some of that out through the questioning.

We'll start with Mr. Boulerice. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to our two guests for joining us today to help us with our study. I feel that it is really timely and important. My questions go to both of you.

In 2008, before I had been elected to the House, I visited a garment factory in my constituency that made jackets for Moores. The factory was soon going to close because, at the time, the federal government was not applying the measures developed by the World Trade Organization for the protection of manufacturing sectors, including the textile industry. In the factory, I saw workers 50 and 60 years old who had spent their whole lives making pants and jackets.

They knew how to do that very well, but they did not have the qualifications to do anything else. The men and women I met were not only anxious, they were also a little disillusioned and despairing by virtue of what they had to look forward to. Their pension was not enough and they were not old enough to qualify for the old age pension. They did not have the qualifications they needed in order to be able to return to the workforce. In your view, what should the federal government do in cases like that?

The story of the people in that factory is the same story we have seen all over Canada since the collapse of the manufacturing sector. Hundreds of thousands of people who have devoted their lives to make a factory or a company a success have been forced into unemployment. They have no prospects, except for exclusion and poverty. What should the federal government be doing to stand with those workers?

[English]

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: I think you've heard about programs, and you probably know far more than I do about the targeted initiative program. That seems to be the approach taken when there has been a displacement of workers and there is a need to consider how to address the opportunity and the training needs for those workers to find new jobs.

This is a very complicated area. We have to leave it to those in government to determine the right approach. Ultimately, you know there are needs for a lot of training. I mentioned essential skills and the fact that some people may have low educational attainment. That means they may not be equipped for the other opportunities that have arisen in an economy.

It's very challenging, but I think this is an area where government rather than business has an important role.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I do not have the answer to that broad question. To echo what my colleague has just said, the pressing needs and problems of older workers are not currently being addressed. In my opinion, all workers really need is to be able to go through their careers with the mindset of lifelong training. Lifelong training does not just happen when workers are 20, 30 or 40. Lifelong training means training people of all ages, including those who are 50 and 60.

I go back to the issue of stereotypes. It is easy to say that older workers do not have any knowledge of new technologies. But if they are never trained in those new technologies, the stereotype becomes entrenched. A vision that training has to be lifelong is the first step to preventing older workers from being left by the wayside, with training that is obsolete in comparison to what their younger colleagues are receiving.

By contrast, there are excellent organizations that remain committed to keeping older workers on the job. Why does the government not consider supporting the good ideas and practices of companies who really are the models when it comes to keeping older workers employed?

Knowing that many organizations in Canada are actually committed to the added value that older workers contribute, why not use them as models in order to demonstrate their good practices and implant them in the public consciousness and discourse about keeping older workers employed?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you. I am happy to—

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Boulerice, you have about 15 seconds. I don't know if you want to ask a short question. If not, we'll move to the next speaker.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Already?

[Translation]

I have just one comment to make.

We also have to be aware of the fact that, if people are working longer today, it is often because they have no choice. Only a third of Canadian workers have a pension plan. Most of the time, it is not a defined benefits plan, it is a defined contributions plan. And now the Conservative government is going to be forcing them to work for two years longer in sometimes difficult working conditions. We also have to think about the whole structure of complementary private pension plans as well as the structure of public pension plans.

On another matter, I think Mr. Adler needs help with some water management issues today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boulерice. I guess we'll take that as a comment.

We'll move to Mr. Butt. Go ahead.

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

Thank you to both of you for being here. You made some very insightful comments.

I would be interested in both of your perspectives on this.

I have had several people in my office who I would say are in their early to mid-50s. They had worked for whatever company they worked for and that job is no longer there for whatever reason. Now they want to get back into the workforce. Obviously, they want to keep working, either because they have to or because they want to, but they're hearing over and over again, when they're applying for jobs and going to interviews, that they are overqualified, and that's the reason the company is not willing to hire them. It's not because they don't like them or don't think they can do the job, but they're hearing this term "overqualified".

Sarah, from the perspective of the employer, and Martine, from your perspective of doing a lot of work in this area, how do we change that perception in the business and employment community? How do we turn it around to say you're not overqualified and you have a lot of value to bring to this job because of the experience you have?

I'm struggling, as one member of Parliament who meets with constituents in that age category who are trying to find work and are hearing this. Have you got any advice or ideas on how we can turn this negative view into something positive?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Thank you, Mr. Butt, for that question and comment.

I don't know how prevalent that type of circumstance is. Certainly, I am hearing quite a different set of comments recognizing the experience that experienced workers can bring. There is quite a bit of demand in this ThirdQuarter program, for example, from individuals looking for jobs, to continue working, even as they are a little bit older. There is a real recognition by a lot of the employers—I think there are 3,000 companies registered in that system—that there is experience and maturity and skills, and if there's the willingness on the part of the older worker to keep working, then that's a very good fit. I think it's the employer's loss if they are overlooking the opportunity to take on experienced workers.

The other important thing is that older worker employment is not apparently affecting youth opportunities. I think that's an important point to bear in mind; the statistics are not bearing out that it's having any significant impact.

I think there's an awareness. I think as more employers realize that they need everybody with experience and skills to bring to the positions they have open in a tightening labour market, they should

be looking much more closely at those individuals who are interested in the positions and not overlook experience.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: I will be quick because, in a way, I will be finishing up what my colleague Sarah has just mentioned.

Once again, it is a matter of the rhetoric we use. What does being overqualified mean? When we have a big labour shortage and when young people often come along loaded down with degrees but with very little practical field experience, you can easily turn the rhetoric of overqualification into the added value of being able to pass on knowledge. If an older worker is overqualified, so much the better. That means that he will be able to pass on his knowledge to younger workers.

That reminds me that I should mention that, to change stereotypical attitudes about older workers being underqualified or overqualified, younger workers absolutely have to be part of the equation. If young workers are not convinced that the older worker has something to offer them, the obstacles will always remain obstacles. So why not create teams with a wide age range? When there is a project to create a new piece of technological equipment, why put all the young workers together to work on it? Why should there not be a 60-year-old worker in the team too?

In fact, being in contact with different age groups and people of different ages is a really good way to break down stereotypes. That context is at micro level. But change can begin there, with initiatives where different generations exchange ideas and the overqualified complement the underqualified.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Butt. You're almost out of time there.

We'll move to Mr. Cleary.

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

This is a fascinating presentation. On the one hand you have the chamber talking about the challenges of tapping into the older workforce, and on the other hand we have a professor talking about ageism.

I only have a few minutes, so I'll give two questions right off the top.

First, what are the unique challenges in terms of educating older workers? Do you even—and I want to be a little sensitive about this—bother to educate workers over 65, or would most of the education be targeted at the workers aged 55 to 64?

Second, in terms of ageism, one of your main points has been that there's not enough study into this. What do you propose? I find it fascinating; I haven't heard much discussion about the problem of ageism. Considering, again, how we need to tap into that pool, what do we do about it?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: I will start on your question about the challenges for those over 65, the older workers.

If we look at them in terms of existing employees, I think the employer is making sort of a calculation. There has to be a discussion with the employee in terms of how much longer, ideally, they would like to be working, or have the interest in working.

Then there's the calculation with respect to the investment in training that the employer is interested in making. There's that notion of continuous learning and the opportunity to keep upgrading your skills as your career progresses. That's in the existing worker.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: And now the unique challenges...?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Then there's the unemployed older worker, who for whatever reason at 65 or older is looking to stay working and earning an income. If there are challenges there, I think they may come back to the reference I made to educational attainment and the fact that the nature of work has changed. Perhaps if they were a long-tenured worker in a certain position, doing a certain type of work for many years, and then they came into the labour force looking for a new opportunity....

You know, we've seen a great deal of shift to this knowledge worker economy, and that is very different perhaps for many people. They may not have the skills set. There may need to be some essential skills training—the literacy, the numeracy, the other skills that would need to be addressed.

That really is the role of government, obviously. There are lot of good programs out there, and I think there's more attention needed. But it's bridging that gap and seeing the opportunity for new skills to be acquired so that they can at least have a much better crack at the skilled work that is available today.

• (1220)

Mr. Ryan Cleary: I'm not sure that answered my question, but let's get to ageism.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: Of course.

That is actually an excellent question. That is the big question in the research field and we are certainly not going to get to the solutions today.

At the beginning of my presentation, I mentioned that it took years before truly effective measures were in place to combat workplace sexism and racism. Right now, I think we have reached a turning point with the ageing of the workforce. Concrete measures have been implemented to put an end to ageism.

If I were really radical, I would say that we should have zero-tolerance policies for ageism in the workplace. I would specifically say that every manager must be responsible for their hiring decisions and must be accountable. When a young 35-year old worker and a 55-year old worker have the same skills, why is the young worker chosen?

Managers play a key role in changing attitudes. Ageism is an attitude. To change people's attitudes, employers must declare that they value ageing in the workplace.

If the head of a large company only meets with older workers to talk about their retirement, those workers will clearly feel that they are no longer useful. Why don't managers conduct loyalty-building

interviews with older workers? Why not come up with career development policies specifically for people aged 50 and older?

Managers play a critical role. As a researcher, I have become a strong believer in zero-tolerance policies. However, I also think that we need national awareness campaigns to inform people about ageism. A lot of people are not familiar with the issue. Yet it is an insidious and damaging problem in the workplace.

[*English*]

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

And thank you for your response.

We'll move to Mr. Mayes. Go ahead.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

I want to talk to Professor Lagacé about the stereotyping. We were talking about the workforce, but it's really a societal thing. The financial institutions are preaching the gospel of freedom 55, and the unions are negotiating retirement ages further and further down. When I turned 55, I didn't think it was any different from being 54. It's a big issue. We're living longer, we're healthier, and that's putting pressure on company pension plans and on old age benefits that the government provides.

How can we change this attitude? It's not, as I say, an employer or a business attitude. It's more of a society attitude. How can we communicate that this whole gospel of having to stop and not do anything once you hit a certain age, 55 or 65, and that you're out into the pasture for the rest of your time...? We need to communicate to people that they really have an opportunity to work as long as they want and they are a valued part of society and the workforce.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Martine Lagacé: Thank you for that excellent question; it truly reflects the paradox of our society.

It is true that women can expect to live up to 85 years and men up to 79 years. Life expectancy is constantly going up. We can be proud of the medical advances and the fact that we can live ever longer and still have a good quality of life. Ironically, the social clock, meaning the expectations that we have in terms of people's social participation, is going backwards. So there are two different messages. On the one hand, the official message is: "Let's enjoy our extra years". On the other hand, the message is: "Leave the workforce and retire".

Freedom 55 really is a myth. Many people who retired when they were 55 actually returned to work—not full-time work, but part-time. That shows that work is not necessarily a burden. Your question is important because it has to do with people's attitudes and collective responsibility. That means that we must change the whole rhetoric around work. Work can be something meaningful and can be an enriching tool in the lives of those who wish to keep working.

Changing a rhetoric means changing the rhetoric of a government and researchers. As gerontology and psychology researchers, we too can sometimes be “ageists” without even realizing it. The media's rhetoric is also very “ageist”.

Your question deals with the rhetoric on ageing. How do we change that? I think awareness campaigns that promote work and ageing can start to change people's attitudes slowly but surely.

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Colin Mayes: Thank you.

Do I have time for one question?

I'd like to ask a little bit about this. In your opening statement, Madam Anson-Cartwright, you mentioned flexible work arrangements, and you talked a little bit about part-time and seasonal and maybe contracting and working out of the home. Is there any other thing you can add to that, other ways to make it convenient for people who are older to get into the workforce and be part of the workforce?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: One other approach I've heard is that some companies have adopted alumni programs, where again they're looking to tap into previous, experienced employees who have retired, and they may want to bring them on for a short term, like six months or less, for a project. That's another opportunity, and again it could be for that knowledge transfer we talked about between the existing younger workforce, potentially, and the departed former employees. It can very much be project-based as well.

Mr. Colin Mayes: May I ask another quick question?

In your experience, do older workers want to go back to work or find a job because of financial pressures, or is it just because they think it's a healthy part of their lifestyle to be working?

The Chair: Give a short response, if you can.

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Yes.

I think you heard some survey results in the testimony on Tuesday. I believe financial consideration was not necessarily the overriding reason, but of course we have a reality that after the recession many people lost a lot of savings. We have to recognize that the private sector half of employment is in small businesses. I expect a lot of those people are without their own sufficient savings.

There are a lot of implications on the financial side I think now in these recent years, and there's also a labour market reality where employers are looking to retain more and more workers. So there may be some demand and also supply opportunity for workers.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We will conclude with Mr. Cuzner.

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

Thank you both for being here and for your testimony.

I want to pick up on something Ms. Anson-Cartwright mentioned in her comments, and it follows on an issue that my colleague Mr. Butt brought forward in the last round of witnesses. That's the

disincentive for older workers who are receiving OAS and the 50% clawback.

I know that a number of years ago—I don't know if you were engaged at that time with the chamber—they did a lot of work on the underground economy and the impact of the underground economy. Would this have the potential of driving some work opportunities underground, if they say, “I'll come and work, but I don't want to lose any money from my OAS”? Do you see that potential?

• (1230)

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Mr. Cuzner, unfortunately, I wasn't at the chamber, so I'm not aware of that work. I don't think I'm qualified to hazard a guess. I think we would need to look into that research. Perhaps it's an area....

I was referring to the 50% clawback associated with the GIS, not the OAS, just to clarify that. That is the guaranteed income supplement, as you know, for lower-income individuals.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: But you see that as a disincentive, though?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Do you mean the clawback?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Yes.

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: Yes.

I just heard of an individual yesterday, an older person, who was offered a working opportunity, and he said, “Well, I can only earn a certain amount of income because I don't want to risk losing my GIS and my OAS.” The clawback was very real to him. He'd done his calculations. Fortunately, he found an arrangement, so he will be working up to a set number of hours.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I agree with you, and I see it as a disincentive as well, as did Mr. Butt.

I guess, by extension, those who aren't at a point where they're receiving OAS or GIS, if they're working.... Some people who are 55 years of age and older start to work and they're looking for flexible hours—as you both indicated—so some don't want to work full time. But what they see is that during their part-time work, if they're receiving an EI benefit at that juncture in their life and they take some part-time work, the first 50% of that is clawed back.

Would you see that as a disincentive as well for that age group, the working while claiming EI?

Ms. Sarah Anson-Cartwright: I don't think I could speak to that. I'd have to see how the mechanism works. I'm not familiar with how people's decisions might be made around that circumstance.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I just see a commonality through that.

Mr. Chair, I'd say I probably have about 45 seconds left, so you can have that.

The Chair: Fair enough.

We thank you very much for being so very accommodating today and allowing us to hear from you in the fullness of your presentation. The committee will certainly take your remarks into account when they prepare the report. Again, thank you very much.

We'll suspend briefly, because we do have some committee business to deal with.

• (1230) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1230)

The Chair: I'll call the members back to the table here, and we'll continue with our agenda.

The next item on the agenda, on committee business, is a notice of motion by Rodger Cuzner.

• (1235)

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Chair, could I move that the committee go in camera?

The Chair: Yes, you could. We will do that.

An hon. member: I'd like a recorded vote on that, sir.

The Chair: Do you wish to vote? All right.

All those in favour of moving in camera?

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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>