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—
Chair

Mr. Phil McColeman

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

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•(1530)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP)): I would like to call the meeting to order.

I am just filling in for the chair today.

As you know, today we start our study of opportunities for aboriginal persons in the workforce.

I want to thank departmental staff for being here. It's my understand that two of you will be speaking. First will be James Sutherland, followed by Sheilagh Murphy. You have 10 minutes each.

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy (Director General, Social Policy and Programs Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I'm going to share with Allan. He's going to do a portion of the AANDC presentation.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. James Sutherland (Director General, Aboriginal Affairs Directorate, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development): Good afternoon, everyone.

On behalf of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), I would like to thank the committee for the invitation and the opportunity to speak with you today on the government's commitment to increasing skills and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people through its Aboriginal labour market programs.

[English]

ESDC maintains positive relationships with many aboriginal organizations and views them all as important partners in economic and social development.

I know there are specific questions and information sought by the committee with respect to ESDC's aboriginal labour market programming and how programming has impacted aboriginal people. I will do my best to answer those questions to the extent that I can. In order to answer these questions, I would like to start by providing an overview of the aboriginal labour market context in Canada. Following my presentation, I will be happy to answer any other questions you may have.

The aboriginal population continues to face complex and persistent challenges that impact their participation in Canada's economic and social development.

A case in point is the unemployment rate of the aboriginal population in Canada. In 2011 the unemployment rate for aboriginal people was 15%. In comparison, the unemployment rate among the non-aboriginal population was 7.5%. If you break the three aboriginal groups into their individual numbers, the unemployment rates in 2011 are as follows: Métis at 10.4%; first nations at 18.3%; and Inuit, the highest, at 19.6%.

These statistics tell us that from a labour market efficiency perspective, the aboriginal population is a source of labour that is underutilized.

[Translation]

Added to this situation is the fact that the Aboriginal population is the youngest and fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, with a median age that is 13 years younger than the Canadian population at large.

Growth is four times the rate of the non-Aboriginal population. Between 2006 and 2011, the Aboriginal population grew by 20.1%, compared to a 5.2% increase for the non-Aboriginal population.

Comparatively, the Canadian population continues to age, with many leaving the labour force for retirement.

In addition, the demand for Canada's natural resources has driven a growth in expected job opportunities that will increase the need for skilled labour. Given the proximity of many First Nations communities to large economic projects, there is a tremendous opportunity to address some of Canada's skills shortages, while improving economic opportunities for Aboriginal people.

[English]

This underutilized and untapped source of labour underscores the reason ESDC's investments in aboriginal skills development and training are vitally important at this juncture in time.

•(1535)

[Translation]

ESDC has a long history of supporting skills development and training of Aboriginal Canadians by working with Aboriginal organizations to design and deliver tailored labour market programming to meet the unique needs of people in their communities.

[English]

There are three aboriginal-specific programs that I would like to mention today that help aboriginal people to acquire the skills they need to participate in the Canadian economy. It is important to note that two of these programs are accessible to all aboriginal people, regardless of their affiliation, first nations, Inuit, or Métis, or their residency, on reserve or off reserve, while the third is targeted to first nations on reserve only.

The aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, or ASETS as we call it, is ESDC's flagship program that helps all aboriginal people, first nations, Inuit and Métis, prepare for, find, and keep high-demand jobs.

Launched in April 2010, ASETS will invest \$1.68 billion over five years, 2010 to 2015, in aboriginal service delivery organizations to deliver skills development and training to aboriginal people throughout Canada. There are 85 aboriginal service delivery organizations providing employment services through more than 600 points of service across the country in urban, rural, and remote areas.

ASETS is founded on three strategic pillars: one, providing demand-driven skills development; two, fostering partnerships with the private sector and other levels of government; and three, ensuring accountability for improved results.

ASETS is demonstrating increased employment and return-to-school outcomes. Since 2010, ASETS has seen approximately 48,000 clients become employed, 22,000 clients return to school, 128,000 clients complete one or more interventions, and over 50% of clients either employed or returned to school.

I would also like to mention an important component of ASETS programming that helps facilitate an individual's participation in education and training, and that is child care. Under ASETS, \$55 million per year under the first nations and Inuit child care initiative supports a network of 8,500 child care spaces in over 450 sites in first nations and Inuit communities across Canada.

Child care is an eligible expense under ASETS programming. Any ASETS service delivery organization can choose to use a portion of what they receive through their ASETS agreement funding to fund child care for parents who are in training. This includes Métis, non-status Indians, and off-reserve first nations.

Given the focus of this HUMA study, I would like to share with you an example of how the program has provided the necessary skills and training leading to employment for one of its participants.

Lucien Ledoux, is an aboriginal welder employed with Running Deer Resources located in Manitoba. He was selected as a role model to speak on behalf of aboriginal youth at an aboriginal mining conference. He said, "Being certified"—as a welder—"has allowed me to get opportunities I would not have had otherwise. My life has become structured and I find things more valuable to me now because I earned them." In addition, he stated, "There is a sense of accomplishment when you know something you built will be standing long after you are gone." He noted that his family is very proud of his accomplishments, which he said have made them strive for more in their own lives. His success was made possible through

ASETS, which provides funding support to a local ASETS service delivery organization in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[Translation]

Through ASETS, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations are fostering a stronger, more vibrant workforce through partnerships with employers across Canada. Whether Aboriginal organizations are encouraging small businesses to hire Aboriginal people through wage subsidies or negotiating complex multi-stakeholder partnerships with major corporations, the result is training that is aligned to concrete employment opportunities.

[English]

The second aboriginal labour market program administered by ESDC is the skills and partnership fund, or SPF. SPF was launched in July 2010 and is funded at \$210 million over five years.

SPF is a flexible project-based program that leverages partnerships and responds to government priorities and emerging untapped labour market needs to get aboriginal people into jobs. SPF targets aboriginal people for skills development and training, including for high-skilled in-demand jobs.

SPF also targets major economic training-to-employment projects in high-demand sectors. To date, SPF has had three calls for proposals. The first and second calls for proposal were open and more general in nature and resulted in numerous small to medium-sized projects up to about \$3 million that were shorter term, focusing on skills training for short-term small to mid-sized skills development initiatives and innovation in service delivery.

Under the first two calls for proposals, SPF leveraged varied partnership contributions from employers. In 2012 the third call for proposals incorporated a targeted approach to support projects in the natural resource sector, in particular, the mining and energy sectors.

This approach built on the successes and best practices from the aboriginal skills and employment partnership program, ASEP. The approach focused on areas where there is known demand for long-term jobs and required a mandatory minimum contribution of 50% from partners, for example, the private sector, provinces and territories, and educational institutions.

SPF provides support for aboriginal communities and organizations to create partnerships with industry on major economic development projects to generate employment and economic benefits for communities located in the catchment area of these projects.

● (1540)

For example, there are projects operating in high-demand areas such as the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, shipbuilding in the Atlantic and on the west coast, and pipeline projects in British Columbia.

[Translation]

There are currently 80 approved SPF projects, the majority of which are training-to-employment. This means there are employers who have identified available jobs, and partner with organizations to train Aboriginal people for these jobs. SPF is expected to assist more than 8,000 individuals gain employment over the life of the program. All SPF funding is allocated until 2015.

[English]

Finally, you will also hear about the on-reserve income assistance reform initiative from my colleagues from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Recently, the government announced in budget 2013 the initiative to improve the on-reserve income assistance program, which is jointly managed by AANDC and ESDC. Income assistance reform is a four-year initiative funded at \$241 million to help reduce income assistance dependency rates on reserves.

ESDC's portion of this, the first nations job fund, FNJF, is funded at \$109 million. The program will provide job training to 18- to 24-year-olds who were referred from participating first nations communities. The FNJF will be delivered through the ASETS delivery network and will support the same job-training activities that are provided under ASETS.

ASETS and SPF both expire on March 31, 2015. As a result, ESDC is exploring seeking a renewed mandate for aboriginal labour market programming. ESDC has been holding discussions with ASETS and SPF service delivery organizations, national aboriginal organizations, provinces and territories, major employers, and other stakeholders, on the future of ESDC's aboriginal labour market programming beyond 2015.

[Translation]

ESDC held 15 regional engagement sessions across the country between September and November. In addition to the regional sessions, ESDC also met with provinces and territories, employers and some SPF projects. The issues raised in these discussions are a valuable and important component to inform the development of our policy work going forward.

[English]

ESDC also formally partners with national aboriginal organizations to collaborate on joint policy priorities and seek feedback on how to improve aboriginal labour market programming, among other things. This work will help inform the future direction of aboriginal labour market programming. These partnership agreements are with the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Native Women's Association of Canada, and the National Association of Friendship Centres, the last three of which represent off-reserve first nations as part of their membership base.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Over the coming months we will be analyzing what we have heard from stakeholders during our engagement activities. Analysis of data and outcomes from the programs is being undertaken, but it is premature at this point in time to make any conclusions about the future of this programming beyond 2015.

[English]

In conclusion, let me say that ESDC is committed to continue working closely with aboriginal organizations, on and off reserve, urban, rural, and remote, to ensure that aboriginal people can play an active role in Canada's economic and social development.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

Sheilagh, you're going to be sharing your time with Allan, but I'll just remind you that together you have 10 minutes.

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: Thank you.

Madam Chair and honourable members, we are pleased that your committee is studying the opportunities for aboriginal persons in the workforce and specifically the supports available to them through the Government of Canada. We're glad to have the opportunity to contribute to your study by describing some of the initiatives that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has been undertaking in this regard.

I will focus my remarks on the programming changes that we're making to social and education programming. Allan Clarke will be talking about the lands and economic development sector of our department.

In the labour market context, equipping first nations people with the skills and opportunities they need to fully participate in the economy is a priority for the Government of Canada, as it is for first nations. In his presentation, James, from Employment and Social Development Canada, has outlined for you some of the key labour market drivers and barriers that exist for aboriginal persons. It is fair to say that the statistics and demographics are well known: persistent high unemployment rates, coupled with the youngest and fastest growing population. More than 600,000 aboriginal youth could enter the labour market by 2026.

We would only add a couple of other comparative statistics. The graduation rate for first nations students is 38%, compared to 87% for the non-aboriginal population. Moreover, the rate of dependency on income assistance is 35% for first nations living on reserve, compared to a 5% average nationally for the country as a whole. This dynamic underlines some of the programming reforms that we are pursuing which have the objective of aligning on-reserve social and education programming to the kinds of systems and supports that have been developed by provincial governments.

Our collective efforts in income assistance reform were mentioned earlier by James. Since the mid-1990s, provincial and territorial governments have been evolving their social assistance regimes away from what is called a passive approach of simply providing benefits to those who qualify, toward a more active approach of working with individuals toward long-term labour market attachment.

In recent years Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has been facilitating similar approaches among first nations who were interested in experimenting with such active measures, as we call them. This was pursued largely through pilot projects or partnerships with industry and provinces, but not on any comprehensive or sustained basis.

The investments in economic action plan 2013, the \$241 million over four years, launch a significant improvement to the on-reserve income assistance program toward an active case-managed approach that aligns better with provincial practices. This funding is in addition to the \$861 million in expenditures in 2012-13 for current programming. This includes basic income assistance, which has been growing at a rate of approximately 4% annually.

Here's what we mean by a change in approach. Currently, the majority of first nations delivering the income assistance program do not provide people with the support necessary to help them enter the workforce. Instead, the focus is solely on an assessment of a person's eligibility, and if that person qualifies, payments of benefits. This arrangement does not help young first nation men and women access training programs, improve their skills, and find, keep, and reap the benefits of good jobs.

The government intends to support first nations youth to get training and jobs before they come to rely on income assistance over the long term. Under enhanced service delivery, the \$132 million portion of the fund that is to be administered by my department, first nations, or in most cases aggregated first nations organizations, will establish a case management system whereby case workers will work with individuals to help identify barriers to employment and to develop a personalized case plan to address those barriers. This case management will involve several steps, including intake, employability assessment, development of a mandatory action plan, and in many cases referral to a training opportunity.

The referral step is where our partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada comes into play. Case-managed income assistance clients who are recommended for training will be referred to a first nations job fund-supported organization. As Mr. Sutherland's presentation described, the first nations job fund is to be administered by Employment and Social Development Canada, primarily through the existing ASETS delivery network. This will

help ensure that existing resources, connections, and networks are leveraged to the extent possible and that first nations organizations themselves are not put in a position of having to reinvent the wheel of established links with local training facilities and employers.

• (1550)

Enhanced service delivery and the new first nations job fund were designed to complement each other to improve the on-reserve income assistance program. The improved program will help ensure that young clients, age 18 to 24 years, who can work, have the incentives to participate in the training necessary for them to gain employment. The income assistance benefits of young clients will depend on participation in the necessary training as per current practices in most provinces.

The government expects that implementation of these improvements to the delivery of the on-reserve income assistance program will be incremental, initially focusing on willing and ready first nation service providers. We have been getting a good response from first nations wishing to participate in this new approach. Some 26 of 36 first nation organizations solicited to submit proposals for the first intake round met the deadline. Those organizations represent more than 70 first nation communities.

[*Translation*]

I will now talk about the education reform. While the income assistance reform focuses on youth aged 18-24, the link between educational attainment and labour market attachment is strong and therefore suggests a focus on primary and secondary education.

Here too the Government of Canada has been implementing a comprehensive reform effort to ensure that First Nations students have access to the same opportunities as all Canadians in terms of the education they receive. First Nations students on reserve are the only students in North America with no legal framework underpinning their education, and no formal system in place to ensure a quality education.

That is why, in Economic Action Plan 2012 and 2013, the government committed to develop new legislation for First Nations elementary and secondary education that would establish the structures and standards to support strong and accountable education systems on reserve.

The proposed legislation would provide First Nations control over First Nations education, allowing them or their education authorities to develop and deliver curricula that reflect their unique linguistic and cultural needs and interests, while ensuring education standards are equivalent in quality to school systems off reserve.

The draft legislative proposal is intended to improve First Nations student outcomes, to ensure they are able to graduate with a high school diploma and are equipped with the skills and tools they need to go on to post-secondary education or to enter the labour market. Greater education attainment will inevitably lead to greater participation in the workforce.

[English]

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Allan Clarke, director general, lands and economic development, to continue the discussion on the department's role in ensuring aboriginal people are training and employed through the skills and partnership fund and other economic development programming.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you so much.

We'll go over to you, sir.

Mr. Allan Clarke (Director General, Policy and Coordination Branch, Lands and Economic Development Sector, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I'll try to move through this rather quickly, given the time we have. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Jobs and economic growth are very important and fundamental to improving the lives of aboriginal people in Canada. Opportunities for first nations, Inuit, and Métis people have never been greater.

In 2009 the Government of Canada launched the federal framework for aboriginal economic development, which is a modern and comprehensive policy approach to aboriginal economic development. It is opportunity driven and puts emphasis on building partnerships with aboriginal groups, the private sector, and the provinces and territories.

There are more than 20 different departments and agencies that have some measure of responsibility for aboriginal people in the economy, and the framework is a whole-of-government approach that brings some of these collective actions together. It is focused on five priorities: to focus the role of government around being an enabler to help eliminate and reduce some of the barriers to economic development, particularly on reserve; to leverage partnerships and resources to seize new opportunities and capitalize on increased private sector interest; to enhance the value of aboriginal assets through a modern lands and resource management regime and legislative and regulatory initiatives that leverage a growing land and resource base; to foster a business friendly climate on reserve land and strengthen aboriginal entrepreneurship through improved access to capital, procurement opportunities, and enhanced local service delivery; and to support demand-driven labour market needs with strategic investments in human capital, which you've already heard a little bit about.

With the framework guiding our efforts, we are achieving some very positive and promising results. We have a number of examples around procurement, including the \$1.17 billion Canadian air force 5 Wing Goose Bay project in Labrador, and the \$33 billion national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Through projects like these, with 20- to 30-year life spans, aboriginal businesses and individuals will now have access to millions of dollars' worth of procurement opportunities and employment opportunities.

Last year, through our department's community economic opportunity program, \$16 million was invested, and there were 200 on-reserve projects to create jobs, generate revenues, activate lands and resources, and enhance infrastructure, which resulted in more contracts and sales for community businesses.

Significant efforts are also under way to remove barriers to economic development on reserve lands caused by the Indian Act. These efforts are helping to create the conditions necessary for economic success. The first nations land management regime, for example, allows first nations to opt out of the 34 land-related sections of the Indian Act and assume control for their reserve land and resources so they can operate at the speed of business. Between January and September of this year, 36 more first nations joined this regime.

Also, since its launch in 2010, the strategic partnerships initiative, or SPI, has supported capacity development in over 300 aboriginal communities and organizations, developed over 80 new partnerships, and leveraged close to \$43 million in additional funding from non-federal and private sources.

A flagship program of the framework, SPI has had important success in a short period of time, and has been a catalyst for preparing aboriginal people and communities for participation in many significant economic opportunities.

Emerging economic opportunities are increasingly large scale and complex. You may already know that more than 600 resource development projects worth over \$650 billion are anticipated in Canada over the next decade, and these hold enormous potential for aboriginal people.

This is heightening the need for federal coordination, early engagement, and more targeted support for aboriginal communities. This is where the strategic partnerships initiative has been playing an important role.

On west coast energy, over the next 20 years global demand for natural gas is expected to rise dramatically, primarily fuelled by rapid economic growth in Asia. There are currently six liquefied natural gas projects being proposed for development on the west coast.

In October, SPI funded two forums for aboriginal groups to improve knowledge about the energy sector in B.C. These events brought together first nations leadership, government, and industry partners to improve understanding and knowledge about the complexities, risks, and opportunities of major resource projects.

• (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): We're going to give you another minute just to finish off.

Mr. Allan Clarke: All right.

There are a couple of other examples I can refer you to in the speaking points around opportunities in resource development in the Labrador Trough and the First Nations Power Authority of Saskatchewan, which are two signature projects that are showing how we can support economic development.

I will end it there and take some questions.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We are very lucky today. We have with us Jean Crowder, the critic for aboriginal affairs, so I'm going to turn it over to her.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank both departments for coming. Of course I have far more questions than I have time to ask, so I will start with a couple of points.

First of all, it's timely, Mr. Clarke, that you were talking about some of the energy development. We have this new report, "Forging Partnerships Building Relationships" by Mr. Eyford. It reaffirms the need for training, including resources for aboriginal leaders to engage in community-based strategic planning, targeted funding for education and pre-employment skills, sponsoring of coordinated regional strategic plans with aboriginal groups and industry, and so on. This is only one of many reports that reaffirm the need for investment in training and education for first nations, Métis, and Inuit.

I also want to comment on Ms. Murphy's comment with regard to K-to-12 education. Of course programs for adults rely heavily on the fact that you have a successful K-to-12 system.

You referenced, Ms. Murphy, the new first nations education act that's been proposed. I'm sure you're well aware of the fact that first nations from coast to coast to coast have some very serious problems with the development of this act and the proposals, including the fact that the act will look at funding in the regulations, but at this point in time, many first nations receive 30% to 40% less funding than comparable schools off reserve.

In your presentation, you indicated, "Here too the Government of Canada has been implementing a comprehensive reform effort to ensure that first nations students have access to the same opportunities as all Canadians in terms of the education they receive."

Can I take that as a commitment that funding will be comparable to off-reserve schools?

• (1600)

Mr. Chris Rainer (Director, Strategic Policy and Planning Directorate, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you for the question.

In budget 2012, the government committed to working with willing partners to introduce a first nations education act that would explore mechanisms to ensure stable—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Sorry, I have limited time. Could you just deal with the question with regard to funding?

Mr. Chris Rainer: Absolutely. We continue to consult on the first nations education draft legislative proposal. We have heard consistently that funding is one of the key issues for first nations. It comes in two forms: the quantum of funding, but also the question of the structure of funding.

The Government of Canada has committed to developing a new approach to funding first nations education that would be based on three principles. When we talk about stable and predictable funding, what we're talking about here is that the legislative proposal would include language that describes the federal government's responsibility for funding first nations education on a statutory basis.

The second principle is that of sustainable funding. What that means is the legislative proposal would ensure a level of funding that would support the provisions of the legislation and promote transparency by determining funding through a formula, such as the provinces do.

The third basis is encouraging the development of education systems, and funding to allow that to occur as well.

Ms. Jean Crowder: The bottom-line question is this: will first nations on reserve receive comparable funding to communities off reserve, yes or no?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Mrs. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): On a quick point of order, Chair, I know that Ms. Crowder is not normally on this committee, and she has a huge passion, but we only have so much time with the officials.

You know, the purpose of the study and the mandate of the study were really focused on the programs and the employment opportunities. I know that education is valuable, but I just guess that—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I can see a connection between the two, actually. There's a very close link between education and ASETS, so I will allow the question to be asked.

To all of our guests, I'm going to urge you to keep your answers brief. If members want an expansion on the answers, they can ask you to expand on them. We do have very limited time.

Thank you very much.

Jean.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It was in the presenter's notes. I'm only referencing what was presented.

Could I have a yes or no answer on comparable funding?

Mr. Chris Rainer: Funding is essential, but it's not the only condition necessary for success. The minister's been very clear that once we can establish what the proper structures and systems for a sound education system are, that money will then follow through the legislative initiatives to ensure that—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

I'd like to touch on the first nations jobs fund. Were first nations involved in the development of that fund?

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: We've been working with first nations over the last number of years to get to active measures, and we've been building on successes they've used. In terms of the first nations job fund, what we identified through our work with first nations is a lack of access to skills training and development.

What the first nations job fund does, similar to what is already available through the ASETS network, is reserve funding for individuals who will be identified for training. The job fund is basically the same programming that's already available through ASETS, but it makes sure that income assistance recipients have access to that on reserve.

That fund is not a different type of programming. It mimics the programming already available through the ASETS network. It also

• (1605)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Were they specifically consulted?

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: We worked with them to identify their needs. Their needs were skills training and development. The ASETS program works well, so we're using the ASETS network to do that training with them.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Our understanding is that the start of the program has been pushed back to January 2014. When will the ASETS holders be informed about when they can start with their projects?

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: I don't think the start date.... We actually solicited proposals in July. Proposals came in at the end of August. We have reviewed those proposals through the fall. We've identified 23 successful proponents twinned with ASETS service providers. We're in the process of finalizing those projects so they can go ahead this fiscal year.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But they haven't been notified at this point.

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: I can't speak to what the jobs fund has done in terms of notification.

Mr. James Sutherland: To date, the final decisions with respect to approving the specific projects have not been made. It's a joint proposal, so you can't go ahead with one without the other. The communities had to provide information as part of the AANDC process, and the ASETS had to provide information to us, but they had to be married up. It's just working it through to the final stages of assessment and it is coming shortly.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Do I have time left?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Yes. You have half a minute.

Ms. Jean Crowder: The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has indicated that in their view the ASETS funding formula hasn't changed since 1999. Is that correct?

Mr. James Sutherland: That is correct.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Do you anticipate increased funding in this current review?

Mr. James Sutherland: We're consulting with the groups. We're going out and engaging all of the groups. I'm sure that as part of that, we will be looking at whether or not a recommendation should be made for additional funding, but that is part of the decision of a renewed program.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn it over to Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank the officials for joining us today as we start what I believe is going to be a very critical and very timely study by this committee.

One quick comment that I do want to make before I head into specific questions is that I feel very fortunate to work very closely with the first nations taxation commission and Manny Jules, and with some of the great work that Tk'emlúps has done. I note that we are trying to move forward in terms of leveraging the assets of lands, but I also note that for some of our financial treatments, GST-HST being one of them, we still have some work to do in terms of how we can encourage development and support.

Again, I'll use the GST-HST as an example. As developers partner with our aboriginal communities, I think that sometimes our financial systems.... Certainly, we've spoken with the finance minister, but I guess question one is, have you been working with those issues and relaying the concerns of the communities? It is brand new. We're treading on new ground in terms of what they're doing and how they're doing it. Are you aware of these concerns? Have you been working towards resolution?

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: Are you talking specifically about tax issues? I'm not sure exactly what you're talking about in terms of resolution issues.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Yes, the tax issues that relate to the land management. You talked in your opening remarks about the First Nations Land Management Act. As we have bands that are moving towards partnering, they're finding some real roadblocks in terms of land titles, GST treatment, etc. As I say, they're breaking new ground, but is that something you're working on with Finance?

Mr. Allan Clarke: I can speak to that.

The first nations land management regime is a very critical piece of economic development. There's a very strong correlation between first nations that are in the FNLM and their economic outcomes. In the last budget there were a number of initiatives which we have undertaken. There is more money committed to getting more first nations into the first nations land management regime. To date, that's been quite successful. There is a marked interest in moving into that regime.

With respect to some of the other issues, particularly some of the work that Manny Jules has been doing around the first nations property ownership initiative, there's a whole bunch of different issues that are related to that. It does, I think, identify some of the issues we have with working around the Indian Act, in that there needs to be more creative thinking about how we work outside the Indian Act. The FNLM, as an example, is a piece of optional legislation that first nations can use to move out of the land sections of the Indian Act and be more effective in terms of their own economic development.

•(1610)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I have a briefing with three specific issues, which I'll share with you. It does relate obviously to job development, but it does relate to some of the impediments as we move forward. I'm trying to really understand the ASETS. You talked about it as being the flagship program, obviously with by far the most significant dollars.

So if I'm Jane and I know there is perhaps a mine that's going to open in three years near my community or in my community, and I'm a single mom, and I have my grade 11 education, and I want an opportunity in that mine, how am I going to feed into that? Am I going to go down the SPF track? Am I going to go down the ASETS track? How am I going to weave into the opportunities? Maybe you could walk me through why I'd end up in one program, rather than the other. What are the benefits of one over the other? How logistically...because I don't have them quite straightened out in my head.

Mr. James Sutherland: I'll start with the ASETS, which is our flagship program.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: So for Jane our single mom.

Mr. James Sutherland: Depending where she is, there will be a point of service. We have over 600 points of service across the country through our 85 ASETS agreements. That's a catchment for everybody, and so if I'm Jane and I'm going in, there will be a door for me very close by that I can go through.

The second path is if there happens to be an SPF project in place that is dedicated directly to that initiative. Under SPF if they were training mine workers in that area, there would be an office dedicated to that. As part of the formation of the SPF project, there are linkages between the ASETS and the SPF. It could be that the SPF project is running a recruitment process, and I see it in the newspaper so I know what door to go through. I may hear it on the radio, or I may see it when I go into the ASETS office. If there's an SPF project that is dedicated to that mine, I will be referred to the correct place for the training in that mine. The company that's running that mine has an interest in getting the people who they need, and they're making an investment, so it works very well that way.

In the absence of an SPF, Jane, as the single mother, would go through the door of the ASETS. Actually, you were handed out a chart, I believe, that goes through the process. Jane goes through the door and she will get to meet with somebody and be assessed.

There are basically four different categories that she would be assessed on. She would be assessed on a career decision. What is the type of career I want? Is mining the place that I want to be? What kind of work do I need to get there? I will also have access to skills enhancement, essential skills that I might need before I actually get training to work in the mine. There's specific work experience and self-employment training as well, and in there I would have some support. You mentioned being a single mother. Child care is an eligible expense under all our programming and is identified as an essential part of doing it. If I am a single mother and cannot find child care for my child, I can't take advantage of an opportunity.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: For the SPF program, do I get the advantage of child care?

Mr. James Sutherland: It's an eligible expense under SPF as well.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: It sounds a little bit similar in terms of what they're doing and what they're providing. Have you analyzed the effectiveness in terms of one program versus—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I'm sorry, you are out of time, but I'm sure that with the time we have left, your turn will come again.

I'm going to Madame Groguhé.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to our witnesses—

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): The chair apologizes to my esteemed colleague sitting over there. How could I possibly have overlooked—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Like the Arab Spring, chaos has broken out here.

•(1615)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Mr. Cuzner, it's over to you.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Phil McColeman's gone.

I know, Chair, that you fought hard for me to get in that first round and I appreciate that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): I did, so I do apologize.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You're a great Canadian.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I want to apologize to the witnesses. I had to duck out and take a call, so you may have addressed a couple of these items in your remarks. I apologize, but I'd like to get to them anyway.

I want to get to the essence of the LMAs and the aboriginal training provisions within the LMAs.

We had the minister before us last week and he sort of stepped back a little bit. He had made a couple of comments regarding the LMAs, and his direct quote was that the LMAs, the programs that were being funded, allowed people to, and his quote was, "keep receiving a welfare payment". He sort of stepped back from that comment in his remarks to committee when he did appear. We know from some of the aspects of the documents that were leaked recently that it seems the aspects of those programs did just the opposite.

What evidence or reports do the departments have now, including the one that was leaked, regarding the effectiveness of the LMA as it pertains to training for aboriginal people?

Mr. James Sutherland: I'm not sure I'm in a position to answer that. I'm not even aware of a leaked document, so that puts me at a bit of a disadvantage.

Our ASETS program is set up very similar to the LMAs and LMDAs. In fact, you could consider it an aboriginal-specific component to that.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: There were components within the LMAs, though.

Mr. James Sutherland: Right, there was recognition of that, and while I don't have it with me, there were a significant number of aboriginal people who accessed service through the LMAs and the LMDAs.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You have no recollection of any assessments that would have been done from those.

Mr. James Sutherland: Not specifically. It is not my area. I would have to go back to the department to get that specifically. I deal with the LMA folks, but more from an ASETS perspective. I apologize.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Ms. Murphy, is it the same for you?

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: We don't actually have responsibility at all for the LMAs and LMDAs. They are managed by provinces, and it would be through Employment and Social Development Canada, but if you have particular questions, we could endeavour to answer them afterwards.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: All we're trying to do is find out whether or not there were assessments done, if there are some kind of assessments. It's probably similar to what Ms. McLeod was asking. If we're able to measure it, then you can address the problem.

On the implementation of the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, there's an assessment, at least according to the 2013 departmental performance report. Could you comment on those, or can you make those available to the committee?

Mr. James Sutherland: By effectiveness, do you mean the results?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Yes.

Mr. James Sutherland: Right, I can quickly review them if you wish, a bit of an aggregate of—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: You could do it fairly quickly, a thumbnail sketch.

Could you provide them to the committee as well?

Mr. James Sutherland: Sure. Let me get the right ones here.

To date, under ASETS, around 45,000 people have found employment. A little over 20,000 have returned to schools over the first two and a half to three years of that, which matches the expectations of the program going in. We were anticipating about 14,000 people finding employment on a yearly basis. ASETS has become more efficient over the last three years and is hitting those targets quite effectively.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: This is probably what Jean was asking in the essence of her question. We know that the success ratio of young people in first nations communities pretty much mirrors everybody else's, when they get to a post-secondary institution or training program, but it's that gap in between.

Do you see this gap? It's trying to address the high school success ratio that's key to anything going forward. Would you share that

opinion, that it is essential we improve the numbers around high school success numbers?

• (1620)

Mr. Chris Rainer: I think we can definitely say yes. At a 38% graduation rate, that's a lot of missed opportunities for students to be able to participate, to choose the paths that they want to follow. A grade 12 graduation is one of those initial steps to unlocking those opportunities and keys for students, absolutely.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I know that you said there are factors other than just the funding gap, but the funding gap, when you compare it to non-first nations students in this country, that per capita gap has to play a role.

Mr. Chris Rainer: In fact, if you look at it per capita, there is no funding gap.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: There is none.

Mr. Chris Rainer: When you take all of the funding provided for K-to-12 education and you compare it to all of the funding for K-to-12 education in the provinces, it compares at least as favourably as the money going in per student. The problem is the per capita amount doesn't tell you the whole story and it's about the opportunities that the students need.

There are all sorts of factors in terms of remoteness. What the provincial funding formula looks at, the majority of their children are in large urban areas. The majority of first nations students are in remote rural areas. We know it costs a lot less per student to fund in an urban area than it does in a rural area.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: I wasn't aware.

Mr. Chris Rainer: Just the per capita figure does not explain what's going on, but when you just take the per capita figure, we compare at least favourably per student.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: It's a complex issue obviously. Can each of you boil it down to one key barrier? What is the main barrier that's standing between first nations and success in skills development?

Mr. James Sutherland: From our perspective, it's essential skills.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much. The time is up.

We go over to Madame Groguhé this time for sure.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the witnesses for being here.

First of all, I would like to make a short comment. As I familiarized myself with the briefing book, it became very clear to me that young Aboriginal people are caught in an exclusion cycle. It is a downward spiral, and the economic deficit and poverty only make the situation worse. The exclusion cycle in terms of entry into the workforce has many facets. Studies have been done on the issue. We know for a fact that, when groups of people are struggling, one of the solutions is to enable them to start school at a young age. The more we educate and guide children early on, when they are 2 or 3, the better the chances this cycle will be broken.

I wanted to make that comment because I felt it was important and essential. Right now, instead of taking a preventive approach, we are taking a curative approach. But we know that a curative approach has its limits.

Are skills development and training programs regulated so that we can assess whether the objectives have been achieved? You gave us some numbers. We have some results. But how many people benefited from those types of programs?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: First, I think your first question was regarding whether we are doing an evaluation of the results.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Yes.

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: We've done evaluations in the past that have focused on results of the previous program on AHRDS and ASEP. We have some strong results coming out of that. We are currently undergoing an evaluation right now that is focusing a bit more on the partnership aspect of the programming but will cover off results. It is definitely a part of what we do. Program evaluation is a key component to all our programming. We're in the field right now collecting the information.

With respect to the actual numbers, I really wish I could—

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: If you don't have them, you can forward them to the clerk.

Mr. James Sutherland: Yes, no problem.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Very well. It would be interesting to see how many people were actually affected and how many people successfully entered the workforce as a result.

I am also wondering if the plan was for those young people to graduate. If, after going through this skills development training, young people work for a while and then want to quit their jobs for one reason or another, how will they be able to find another job if they do not graduate?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: High school equivalency is something that our organizations do a lot of. It's quite often a prerequisite for many types of jobs. For example, for many of the mining jobs you need to have your high school diploma. As they come through our doors, that is quite often identified as one of the key areas to pursue.

With respect to post-secondary, it is an eligible expense for within two years. A lot of clients are referred to colleges particularly, or the course work is through colleges. Quite often it's certification as opposed to having a diploma, certification for a specific job, especially the skilled trades and apprenticeship-type jobs.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have five seconds.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: I will stop talking then.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mr. Mayes.

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the departments for being here.

I was the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for a few years, and Jean was on the committee. We put together what I considered to be a great report on post-secondary education for aboriginal students. I think it was called "No Higher Priority". I think the department is doing a great job in implementing some of the recommendations. It's good to see that when you do these reports, people do read them and move on them. Thank you for that.

I want to get back to the question that was answered in terms of funding for education for aboriginal students. You said in the report that you're working to reform the structure for funding, and you're looking at the need and the program structure to determine the cost.

It's not a matter of there not being funding, it's a matter of first having to find out how much you need.

Is that a correct statement, Mr. Rainer?

Mr. Chris Rainer: Yes. In fact, we've heard it talked about in terms of whether we want to fund an education system based on a 20th century education model, or whether there is a new approach that better meets the needs of first nations students, and what it would take to fund that. We're very much in that consultation phase to determine what is needed and what first nations want. We've heard many things throughout the process so far, and those consultations continue.

Mr. Colin Mayes: I think what you said is important, the consultations. The department has recently done coast-to-coast engagements with aboriginal stakeholders. You're putting together the need and the program structure so that you can eventually come up with a budget to be able to implement something that will be properly funded and structured. Is that correct?

Mr. Chris Rainer: Certainly. The discussions started way back in 1972, with the release of “Indian Control of Indian Education”. It built on the good work of the Senate committee and the report; it's built on recommendations from the Auditor General. Back in December 2012 there was an initial discussion guide released to all first nations. That then led to what we call the blueprint, back in July, which took into account many of the things we'd been hearing up to that time. Those discussions continued and resulted in the release of the draft legislative proposal in October. It is just that: it's a proposal. Based on what we'd heard to date, it was what we thought could be a draft of legislation moving forward.

Those discussions continue. We are very keen and we continue to listen to first nations about what they'd like and what they don't like in that proposal. We want to hear about their recommended changes. We've certainly heard questions around oversight, and we're listening. There have been a few suggestions of other ways of addressing reviews of schools and outcomes, and we'll continue to take those into account.

• (1630)

Mr. Colin Mayes: I want to follow what Mr. Cuzner said about the outcomes as far as K to 12 is concerned. In our study we identified that if an aboriginal person graduated, the number that went on to post-secondary education is the same as in the non-aboriginal population. It was to get them to grade 12. One of the recommendations we talked about was trying to engage, especially young male aboriginals, at an earlier stage in the K to 12 system, maybe grade 9, or grade 10, or whatever, because you need to bring up the interest. Has there been any movement on that?

There are some figures here on unemployment: Métis, 10.4%; first nations, 18.3%; and Inuit 19.6%, and that's the highest. It's misleading in a way because the Inuit are the remotest group. They might not necessarily be close to a resource development, so the opportunities.... We found during the study that a lot of aboriginal people did not want to move away from their traditional community.

As far as those challenges are concerned, how do you see improving employment? Also, I'm interested in whether or not you're going to have to look at maybe helping to move people to the jobs. Is that being reviewed?

Mr. James Sutherland: Yes, by the ASETS. You're talking about people who should be attached to the labour force, and ASETS for the most part is focused on that. I can give you the counts—I've finally found them—of how many people have found jobs, of how many people have returned to school, but the number of people who have improved their employability so they're ready to take advantage of jobs when they should, or when they arrive—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you. Other people might be asking you that question, and we'll give you an opportunity to answer at that time.

We'll move to Monsieur Boulerice.

[Translation]

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

I thank the witnesses for joining us this afternoon.

Just like my colleague earlier, I would like to take a few seconds to go over Canada's record with respect to First Nations. It is not a good record.

Let me point out a few things. Life expectancy for First Nations is six years shorter than the average life expectancy for Canadians. The suicide rate for young Aboriginal people is five times the national average. Infant mortality for Aboriginal people is almost twice as high as for Canadians as a whole. Most Aboriginal people live below or on the poverty line. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is double the Canadian rate. On reserves, the rate can be as high as 30%. Finally, academic failure rates are higher in all their communities.

I think you are doing a good job and you are working hard, but a lot of things still need to be done. We still have a long way to go.

I have some numbers here from the 2012 Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report. The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) provided services to 49,000 clients, as you call them. I would call them people or workers instead. Among those people, 12,000 people found a job and 6,000 others decided to go back to school thanks to your work. So, of the 49,000 people that received services or assistance, only 18,000 had results, meaning that they got a job or went back to school. The success rate is 37%. If we subtract those who went back to school, because we don't know what the outcome will be, and we consider only those who found a job, the success rate is 24%.

In your view, is that satisfactory? Is that good? Does that compare well with what is being done elsewhere?

Mr. James Sutherland: We would really like the success rate to be a little higher.

• (1635)

[English]

We work hard at getting there. The programs are designed to give that control to the community so they can take advantage of the opportunities. That is why we approach things the way we do.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: What steps will you take to increase the success rate?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: With respect to some of the key things we have done, initially we devolved that control over deciding where the priorities lie to the communities themselves. In 2010 we added an in demand aspect to the programming whereby the organizations were supposed to add an analysis of what was available in their regions so that people were not being trained just on what they might want regardless of what was available. As part of the counselling, they would say that maybe the person doesn't want to be a miner, but there are lots of secondary industries that he or she might be able to take advantage of. It's not training everybody as a hairdresser in a community of 100 people.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: No, or everyone would have a great haircut.

Could you tell me how many First Nations members are unemployed in Canada? We often talk about percentages, but do you have a number?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: I do not have that. I would have to go back and ask if it's available. Given that for some of the programming the identification is voluntary, the number I would have would be those who self-identify in the collection process.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I like to be able to compare things. If, in any given year, you serve, help or train 49,000 people, it would help to know how many people are unemployed. I don't know if the number is valid or not, because I don't know what the total pool is.

You are talking about demand-driven skills development. My understanding is that the demand comes from private companies and the labour market.

Do you sometimes train people based on the demand or needs of communities? For instance, a community might need someone to work with young people to fight crime. Perhaps no companies are looking for someone to work with young people, but that need is still part of the demand.

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: In our engagement sessions with the groups over the last several months, that has been a key point: what is actually meant by in demand. However, we do find, particularly with first nations in remote areas, that one of the largest employers is the first nation itself or the community, which is the end goal of our programming.

Quite often, the first priorities are with the community, followed up by the agreements they reach with the companies and businesses that are nearby.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you. You're right on the dot, just as it turned to five. That's good timing.

Our next speaker is Monsieur Daniel.

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

Thank you, witnesses, for being here. I appreciate that.

I'm going to ask some basic questions, because I don't understand the aboriginal community. For example, what is the population of the aboriginal people in Canada?

Mr. Allan Clarke: Based on census information that's self-identification, approximately 1.2 million to 1.3 million people self-identify as aboriginal. Within that, you've got first nations, Inuit, and Métis. There are about 350,000 first nations on reserve, and there are probably an equal number off reserve. Again, this is a ballpark figure. There are about 400,000 people who self-identify as Métis. There are probably 130,000 or maybe less who self-identify as Inuit.

Roughly speaking, it's something like that.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Yes.

Mr. Allan Clarke: We can provide those data.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Sure, that would be great.

Mr. Allan Clarke: There's another thing I could offer as well. I could also perhaps get this to the clerk. This is the benchmark report from the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, which

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): That would be excellent, thank you.

Mr. Allan Clarke: —talks about economic development outcomes and indicators. We could make sure there are copies available for everyone.

Mr. Joe Daniel: That would be wonderful. Thank you very much.

I've worked with various other indigenous groups around the world, and one of the things that's interesting for me is that they really don't have a western attitude in the sense that they don't see a job as being the be-all and end-all, as we do. I'm wondering if the aboriginal people think in the same way.

In other words, with some of these wonderful statistics of how many people get jobs, how long do they keep the jobs for? Do they stay in that job for the rest of their lives or their career, or do they just stay there for a few years until they have sufficient money to get a nice piece of property and then live comfortably off that? It's more an attitude thing rather than anything quantitative.

• (1640)

Mr. James Sutherland: I don't think it would be appropriate for us to speak about the attitudes of a particular population. From an ESDC training people perspective, everyone who comes through our door is looking for a job, right? They're trying to get employment.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Okay.

Mr. James Sutherland: In many instances, it's more a matter of there being no employment, or the nature of the employment might be transitory. It might be in an industry that has busts or booms.

Mr. Joe Daniel: Let's follow through on that. You've shown some 46,000 to 48,000 people having jobs through the process. How long have they held those jobs for?

Mr. James Sutherland: I'm not sure that we collect the information. We look at it for a duration of time—

Mr. Joe Daniel: Okay.

Mr. James Sutherland: —and those 48,000 are those who pass that test. They're identified as keeping the job.

On whether or not they're there two or three years later, what I can say is in our research around the aboriginal skills and employment partnership program, the duration of the job wasn't necessarily tracked, but the increase in income over the average was quite significant when they found that employment.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I want to go now to the fallout at schools. Are we educating these children in the right manner to allow more of them to actually graduate, or are we just applying a standard Canadian school process that is not conducive to their learning background, if you want to put it that way?

Mr. Chris Rainer: One of the fundamental principles in the approaches going forward is first nations control over first nations education, because really, to that point we think communities are best placed to determine what the needs of their students are. What we are proposing is not what you'd see in a provincial education act where they detail how you run your school, what exactly will be taught on day one, day five, and day ten. We think those decisions are best made by communities.

What we do know is that we want to ensure that students do have opportunities once they graduate, so they at least have a high school diploma that would be recognized to give them the opportunities to go into the workforce, into post-secondary education, or whatever choice they would like to make. Education is a key; it's an opportunity.

Mr. Joe Daniel: I agree with that, but there's a fallout rate of 38% or something. Did I hear somebody say that?

Mr. Chris Rainer: There are some very successful examples in parts of the country. For example, in Nova Scotia where they have a self-government agreement, the Mi'kmaq have a graduation rate that actually exceeds that of the non-aboriginal population in the province. They've been doing a fantastic job. Part of that, they tell us, is attributed to the fact that they have control, that they're able to deliver the curriculum in a way that makes sense to their students. They understand their issues.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

I'm going back to Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you Madam Chair.

I have a couple of comments before I pose a question.

I think I have been around here too long because I can remember too many of these reports. To get back to Mr. Mayes' comment about the Inuit, back in, I think it was 2005, Justice Berger issued a report which in part dealt with education in Nunavut. He indicated, I believe, that about \$20 million needed to be infused into the education system in order to meet the conditions in the land claims and self-government agreement. To my knowledge, that report was never officially responded to. You don't need to respond to that.

Mr. Mayes also mentioned the post-secondary report that the committee worked on, which was a very good report. One of the committee's recommendations was to infuse some additional funding into the PSSSP, the post-secondary student support program, and the ISSP, the Indian studies support program. Instead what we've seen are unilateral changes to the ISSP that have made it very difficult for some institutions to carry on with some of the very good aboriginal programming that they were doing.

The third piece I wanted to raise was with regard to per capita funding for K-to-12 schools on reserve. The number that's being floated out there and consistently used says that the funding is somewhere between \$12,000 to \$14,000 per student. That is utter nonsense. On-reserve schools do not get the same level of funding as

off-reserve schools. The number that is being floated is the gross amount of money divided by the gross number of students, and that includes students who first nations have to pay for to attend provincial schools. I've seen the memorandums that demonstrate that sometimes on-reserve schools will get \$6,000, \$7,000, or \$8,000 but they'll be paying off-reserve schools \$12,000 or \$14,000.

We need to clear up this notion that first nations on reserves are getting exactly the same or equitable funding as off-reserve schools. It's simply not true. You can ask any first nations community that is in that situation. If the committee would like it, I can provide some documentation to that effect so that we can quit using that number which is simply not true.

I want to ask Mr. Clarke about FNLMA's.

We would agree, Mr. Clarke, that FNLMA's are certainly a way forward in terms of control in the community of land development, economic opportunity, and certainty. It's a very good program. My understanding is that at the last count there were about 80 first nations that were on the wait list for FNLMA's. Is that still correct, Mr. Clarke?

• (1645)

Mr. Allan Clarke: The number is somewhere up there around that number, although it has been reduced over the past number of years by some more investments in getting first nations onto the FNLMA rule.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You've still got time. We're going to stop the clock for a second.

As the chair I am going to intervene at this stage and say that if you have the actual numbers, could you get them to us through the clerk please.

Thank you.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Sorry, Mr. Clarke.

We've seen some very successful FNLMA's put in place where I think part of the issue is it is a clear demonstration of where first nations have control of what's happening in their communities, which relates to a number of these other factors. Is that correct?

Mr. Allan Clarke: Under the 34 sections of the Indian Act that affect land management, yes.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I want to talk about ASETS and the problems we've been hearing about with regard to client data being uploaded to ESDC.

Has that problem been fixed, Mr. Sutherland?

Mr. James Sutherland: We believe so. There are still some issues to clear through. We recently instituted what we hope is a solution for that.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Some of the ASETS holders have indicated that they don't feel they're adequately resourced to do the reporting that's required under the ASETS program.

Are adequate funds in the contract? You indicated earlier that the formula hasn't changed since the late nineties, and I understand the reporting has increased. Have the resources for reporting been increased?

Mr. James Sutherland: The formula for the distribution of the funding has remained the same, as well as the amount of funding. It has been pretty much a static amount. The rules that they operate under say that 15% of their program funding is to be used toward administrative costs. That has remained consistent.

There have been some changes to the reporting requirements over the years, additions and subtractions, but the amount of money has remained static.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is that part of the review that's going on? I'm sure you're aware that the Auditor General has talked about the amount of reporting first nations and aboriginal organizations are required to do, and has deemed it excessive.

Are they looking at reductions in reporting?

Mr. James Sutherland: Yes, in fact we have an active working group that's working with the ASETS agreement holders to reduce the reporting burden.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thanks, Mr. Sutherland.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

Monsieur Butt.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

As with Mr. Daniel, this portfolio is a learning curve for me as well. Even though I come from Mississauga, which of course is named after the Mississaugas of the New Credit, I have to admit that aboriginal education is not my area of expertise, but it's good to be here and it's good to learn.

Some of the questions Ms. Crowder was asking had to do with funding levels and so on. I know that in Ontario, Catholic education in our public schools is not funded at the same level as public education, yet the outcomes are often better in Catholic education than they are in public education. It's really not an issue about the gross amount of money we're spending on all these programs. It's really about how we're spending the money, where we're spending the money, and what levels of results we are getting.

Would you not agree with that statement?

Mr. Chris Rainer: There is certainly a question on the structure of the funding as well. When we're talking about the per capita, what we're talking about is the full envelope of all money that goes to K-to-12 on-reserve education. The per capita amount is when you divide that up by the number of students; it comes out to that favourable rate. That's up on our website, and we'd love to send you those figures for all of you to see.

The issue, though, is whether it's being spent in the right way. Do first nations have the right control over putting it to the priorities for their particular students in their schools? There are some great models out there across the country that we want to build on to

emulate the success that has occurred in various communities across the country in how they've addressed outcomes and higher graduation rates for their students.

• (1650)

Mr. Brad Butt: I would assume most of the post-secondary education that's delivered for aboriginal people is off reserve, not on reserve. I would suspect there's little to no direct programming on reserve at the post-secondary education level.

What do you find when you track individuals who are taking post-secondary education after they have completed their secondary education on reserve, going off, taking whatever programming they're taking, and then actually returning to live on the reserve and possibly working in the immediate community? Do we have any idea how many or what percentage of those students, after they have completed post-secondary education, want to live back on reserve and work in the neighbouring community? Or are most of these young people who are obtaining post-secondary education leaving and not coming back?

Mr. Chris Rainer: I don't have those figures. We can look at that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

I'm just going to take a moment. I can't help it, so I do beg everybody's indulgence.

We've just heard the news that Nelson Mandela has passed away. I just wanted to share that with everyone. He's a man who touched many lives around the world and is an icon for many of us. It seems strange to just sit here and ignore it when I've just heard that. I do apologize for the interruption. We did stop the clock, and we will carry on.

Mr. Brad Butt: That's completely fine, Madam Chair. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

Maybe I'll let you answer the question, folks.

Mr. Chris Rainer: I don't have those figures. I'm not even sure we track that. Those are the choices of individual students.

We do know that K-to-12 and post-secondary education unlocks all sorts of opportunities. It widens choices for individuals to pursue their careers and to either return to the communities, or to help their communities but from different areas, and we know of many individual examples. We don't track whether students return to their communities or not. Those are their choices to make.

Mr. Brad Butt: Okay.

Is there more time, Madam Chair, or am I done?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have another minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Brad Butt: Do you have any examples of some of the corporate partnerships we've seen, where obviously a business that is within close proximity to an aboriginal community is working hard to partner with and obviously train? Hopefully they will have those young people become employees of their companies, because the work they are doing is in the area.

There were a couple of examples, which I think Mr. Clarke mentioned. Are there others where the private sector and the band council or the reserve are working in partnership specifically to train and then place individuals in full-time positions within those companies?

That's probably going to be it, Madam Chair.

Mr. James Sutherland: I have some strong examples of that.

The first one I would mention would be Noront in the Ring of Fire, which we just signed a skills and partnership agreement with. There's Nalcor, I think it is, in Labrador, with the Lower Churchill project. De Beers in the Northwest Territories works with a project. There's a collectivity of mining companies within the interior of B.C. that are contributing 50%.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We're going to Mr. Tremblay.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for coming to speak to our study on the opportunities for Aboriginal persons in the workforce.

There are provincial programs. My question is quite broad. Have you thought about how to co-operate with the provinces and work with the various existing programs?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: As part of our engagement strategy for the future, for 2015 and beyond, we've had direct discussions with a number of provinces. We try to align our aboriginal labour market programming with theirs. We actually see many of our ASETS agreement holders having agreements with the provinces as well in the delivery of programming.

•(1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Okay.

Some organizations want to help Aboriginal communities. Have you established relationships with those organizations to see what their recommendations are, or do you go directly to the communities to see what their needs are?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: In order to reach economies of scale, over the years we've developed agreements that differ in different places.

In some places, our relationship is directly with the community, or with the governance structure in that community. For example, KRG in Quebec, which is the Inuit group, is who we have our agreement with, and we deal directly with that governance structure. In other areas, it might be done very directly. The Stó:lo in B.C. is another one where our relationship through the ASETS is also directly with the community.

We also do collectivities. In Saskatchewan there is only one agreement, whereby we deal with a representative of all those

communities that have come together collectively. Their board is represented by the tribal councils, but we deal with the organization at an organizational level rather than a community level.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay: Some communities are in more remote areas than others, and it is more difficult for them to have access to services and to benefit from the various programs. We are studying here the opportunities for Aboriginal persons in the workforce. Remote locations are an obstacle. Some communities are doing well and have managed to overcome this challenge, but others are having a harder time. What do you do to ensure that remote communities have access to various programs?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: With respect to ASETS, all the communities are covered off with respect to a point of service or a collectivity that deals with it. To ensure that everybody has something in a priority setting, they go through an annual operational plan whereby they explain to us what those priorities are, as well there's a mid-year checkup to make sure things are going well. That is how we make sure they're doing that.

Also, they set their own targets. What we would expect from an urban community with plenty of opportunity isn't necessarily the same as what we might see from an isolated community that does not have those same opportunities.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

Madame Groguhé, you have one and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Could you tell me if those programs pay special attention to Aboriginal women? Do they receive special training and do they also have access to non-traditional training?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: There are different ways to answer that. The first is that we have a collaboration agreement with the Native Women's Association of Canada, whereby they help us in the development of policy. They also hold an ASETS themselves, whereby they deliver direct service across the country.

For the most part our programming is global in nature. However, our results demonstrate about a 50-50 split with respect to access and results. However, I wouldn't be able to tell you whether individual A was in a non-traditional. We do have one specific SPF project that is about women in mining, which is a non-traditional industry for them. That would be the most explicit example of that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: I have one last question.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have 15 seconds.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: I will ask it anyway.

Are targeted measures being taken to address discrimination issues that Aboriginal people may face? How are those types of challenges handled?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

When we come back to Madame Groguhé, she can remind you of the question.

We're going to Monsieur Shory.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and congratulations once again for becoming the chair for today.

Thank you, witnesses.

In other studies we have heard loud and clear that thousands and thousands of aboriginal youth can be available to get into the workforce. On the one hand we have to bring temporary foreign workers here because we have a shortage of skilled workers. On the other hand we have youth available but they are not taking advantage of the opportunities.

Mr. Rainer, in one of your responses you said funding is not the only requirement. You were alluding to other factors as well. Maybe you could expand on that.

• (1700)

Mr. Chris Rainer: Certainly. Thank you.

In addition to what we've heard about funding, we've heard from various reports, from people like Michael Mendelson, John Richards, and certainly the Auditor General, that there's also the question of whether the right systems and structures are in place to get the results. Can students get access to all the services they need in a one-school model of education, or as we see in the provinces where you have school board entities? We're trying to encourage in the proposed draft of the legislation, can we assist first nations in coming together to create school board-type structures that would allow them to deliver all the second-level services themselves, such as speech pathologists, specialists that any other child in the provincial education systems would have direct access to?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Thank you.

As I said, in previous studies and today as well, we have heard mention of partnership. This partnership with industry has created job opportunities for aboriginal people locally while the projects are taking place in their communities. Is there anything in place that will help connect these people with other jobs once local projects are completed, or once the company moves on to other projects in new areas?

Mr. James Sutherland: The ASETS is established to accept people who come through looking for work. We deal with them at different levels. At this time there is no limit on somebody returning for access. As part of our structure we have, as you see in that chart, job referrals or job connections as well. It's not just a matter of training people. It's also a matter of connecting them with the available jobs.

Mr. Devinder Shory: In terms of education of first nations, Mr. Daniel also talked about graduation numbers, and you mentioned it was 38% or so. Obviously, this has to be improved. You spoke in your introduction about certain plans to improve the student outcomes.

Is there a plan in place to focus the post-secondary training to target skills that are in demand in the labour market and jobs that are available and accessible to these populations?

Mr. James Sutherland: That is a key component of what our programming does. The in-demand aspect and the partnership aspect of our programming is established so there's a linkage made between those jobs. While we seem to focus a little bit on entry-level jobs, we see the communities themselves or the ASETS themselves focusing on skilled jobs, trades, things that require apprenticeships, things that require certificates. If you looked at the representation of aboriginal people in the skilled trades, you'd see that there has been a fair bit of success in that area.

Mr. Devinder Shory: As you know, our government believes that jobs and economic growth are fundamental to improving the lives of aboriginal people in Canada. Opportunities for first nations, Inuit, and Métis people have never been greater, but they need to be ready to take advantage of these opportunities. Governments can play a critical role in helping to create the conditions necessary for economic success.

What is the government doing to improve economic opportunities for aboriginal people? Maybe everyone can chip in on this.

Mr. Allan Clarke: Thank you for that.

In economic action plan 2013, there are a number of commitments to demonstrate ongoing support for promoting aboriginal participation in the economy. There are more resources for consultation of aboriginal people, particularly associated with resource development. We're aligning, as we mentioned already, our on-reserve economic assistance programs with provincial systems to better support training and employment.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

• (1705)

Mr. Allan Clarke: There's more.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You actually had an extra 15 seconds, because I wanted to give you a chance to answer.

We'll move over to Madame Groguhé.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am waiting for an answer to my question about Aboriginal women.

Mr. James Sutherland: On discrimination?

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Yes.

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: In our engagement strategies across the country, we've heard an awful lot about this. It will be something we need to examine moving into the next proposals, post-2015. We believe that working in partnership with business really helps overcome those obstacles. When businesses are looking for employers and the aboriginal population is in a position to meet them, that is one very important key to overcoming that. We often provide, especially in our skills and partnerships fund projects, continued support within the workplace so that aboriginal people can overcome some of those obstacles that may be in place.

The project with De Beers, which I mentioned earlier, actually involves a community representative who works in the company, not as an actual miner but as a liaison between the community, the company, and the individuals, to ensure that any issues that arise in the workplace can be resolved. We find that the common work culture is often seen by the aboriginal employee as being discriminatory. Often that can be overcome simply with better cultural understandings between groups.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: One of the practices that I am familiar with and that works well in companies is tutoring. When companies hire young people, do they have a practice like that in place?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: In our programming we allow for certain types of that: mentorship, job coaches, and that kind of thing. It's not directly under the name you mentioned, but along those lines, yes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Very well.

Budget 2013 says this about the Skills and Partnership Fund: "Projects must demonstrate that they respond to labour market demands, develop partnerships and leverage contributions from the private sector."

What exactly are the labour market demands in Aboriginal communities? Have those demands been determined?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: It really depends on what initiatives are happening. I think Mr. Clarke mentioned earlier about the 600 or so major projects that are either online or coming online in the natural resource sector. Many aboriginal communities that have never been close to economic drivers are now finding themselves within a distance where they can take advantage of that.

I think one of the largest examples of that which most people would be aware of is in the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario. Some communities in dire straits are going to be provided with some opportunities they've never had before.

We work that particular program in a call-for-proposal approach, whereby the community or the aboriginal entity and the business come together in partnership and then they approach us. Not an awful lot of us are identifying the opportunities and then making the linkage, but I will say that this is a requirement under ASETS, that every ASET holder is supposed to examine the labour market in their

area, and that their annual operating plans respond to those particular needs.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Absolutely.

We know that manual or practical professions are not popular with young people. What incentives do you provide to attract young people to that type of professional training? How do you recruit them? We have to address the shortages in order to encourage economic development in some regions. How do you attract young people to that type of training?

[English]

Mr. James Sutherland: I think one of the key parts to that is as the individual comes in, either to skills and partnership projects or into the ASETS themselves, they undergo an assessment. Part of that assessment is to explain what the expectations in a particular area might be. Somebody may come in wanting to work in the mine, but after finding out what's involved, they may not want to. Conversely, somebody may come in not wanting to do that at all, but after going through an information session, some counselling, which is included as part of our programming, they may very well decide to go there.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Okay.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

We'll move to you, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Rainer, you talked before about the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and the 80% graduation rate and how things have improved over the last three years. In my previous profession I was an educator in a school that had a fairly large first nations population, and they were doing very well, particularly the last couple of years that I was there, because the band had made education a priority. They had put together an early childhood education program with a lot of resources, so the students were arriving at school with a lot of skills that the rest of the population, quite frankly, didn't have in many cases. They had resources paid for by the band put into the public school system so the students had extra supports, particularly in the area of literacy.

Mr. Rainer, you talked about essential skills being the biggest hurdle. Would you not agree that you have to start early if you're going to provide those essential skills? Would that be accurate?

Mr. Chris Rainer: We would agree. That's why the focus at this point is on K-to-12 education, and helping communities increase that rate of graduation because without early development of skills, if you can't graduate from high school, then it's difficult to take advantage of other opportunities. So, yes, early education in a way that speaks to students so they want to learn and stay in the school system is critical.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Most demographic data in Canada show that people are having children later. That tends to be a demographic that applies to most of our population, with the exception of first nations who tend to be much younger when they start a family. I think I'm accurate in saying that, am I not? When the students start to come to school a lot of the parents are very young themselves compared to the rest of the population, and that gap has now grown because the rest of the population is having children later.

A lot of effort and a lot of resources also have to be put toward parent education. Is that accurate?

Mr. Chris Rainer: Parents certainly need to be involved in education. It is a critical factor in success. We certainly think the more a community and parents are involved in the well-being and the proper education of their kids, the more successful their children will be.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you. I'm going to move on to the SPF.

In your remarks you talked about some specific projects, one being shipbuilding in Atlantic Canada. I'd like to know a little more about how that particular program works. Can you give me a rundown on how this program supporting shipbuilding affects first nations in Atlantic Canada?

Mr. James Sutherland: We have a specific project with Unama'ki, I think is the name of the organization, which is developing a relationship with Irving and with the secondary and tertiary businesses around there. They will identify the types of jobs that are in need. In fact, many of these employers will make commitments to hiring people.

They will then go out and recruit people for training. When those people are successful in that training, in that scenario, there will be jobs waiting for them in many instances, if not most, once they're finished.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: We're still a couple of years away from cutting steel there. What's the uptake on that? Has there been a significant subscription to that program?

Mr. James Sutherland: We're still in the early days of that particular project, but as I understand it, they've actually been quite successful in recruiting people to start.

To be clear, not all the jobs they will be getting are actually with Irving in building the ships. A lot will be secondary and tertiary, which means that those jobs are available now. The new businesses are setting up, or the existing businesses need to do it.

In addition, I would point out that if it is in the shipbuilding directly, Irving is going to need a lot of people, as will their subcontractors, but other business is still happening. As people are drawn away to go and work there, the backfill can be done with these aboriginal people, who are now trained.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Do you have any idea on how much the investment is going to be for that project?

Mr. James Sutherland: It's approximately \$6 million until 2015.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Roughly, how many clients will that affect?

Mr. James Sutherland: I'd have to look it up. Our projects range from 50 up to 500 or more. I would have to get that specifically for you.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you.

If there were a new mining project in the country and an employer wanted to engage in this program and was looking for employees—we talked about how first nations can apply in those projects—from an employer perspective, how can an employer source out first nations employees?

Mr. James Sutherland: At the moment, the best source is ASETS, because that's in place and it's everywhere in the country. The SPF is fully subscribed at this moment. It is a very popular program, so there's no scope for new projects as of today, but ASETS is still there. If an employer is proactively approaching ASETS for employment, I would fully expect that, as I have seen, the ASET holders are more than happy to deal with them and to train the people they want.

•(1715)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you very much.

Your time is up.

We're back to you, Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thanks, Madam Chair.

Mr. Sutherland, I think you indicated there had been no increase in funding since the late 1990s. I can't remember if it was Ms. Murphy or you who talked about the fact that people who are in the ASETS program can access child care.

We know that there's a rapidly growing younger population and that many of the students who are coming back do have children. Is there an additional pot of funding for child care, or does that have to come out of the existing funding?

Mr. James Sutherland: We have two approaches to that.

We have the first nations and Inuit child care program, which is approximately \$55 million a year. It is focused on on-reserve and Inuit communities. We did expand the scope of eligible expenses under the regular programming to allow for child care to be claimed; however, the overall envelope has remained static.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Is that \$55 million a year something that ASETS organizations can access, or is it individual?

Mr. James Sutherland: It's the organizations that are eligible to receive that money. As I said, it's first nations on reserve; there's a set list of them. They have a set amount that goes to them for provision of the child care.

Ms. Jean Crowder: We have heard that ASETS holders, the organizations that are delivering ASETS, are saying that they're under-resourced for child care expenses, because a significant percentage of their student population has children.

Mr. James Sutherland: That would be consistent with what they have told us.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay. Is that part of the review, then, to look at child care supports?

Mr. James Sutherland: Everything that's under the current system is being reviewed, and we will present options to the government.

Ms. Jean Crowder: To go back to that process and what you indicated, you said in your presentation, "Over the coming months we will be analyzing what we have heard from stakeholders during our engagement activities." Will stakeholders be involved in the final report in making recommendations?

Mr. James Sutherland: We have a multi-tiered approach for how we're seeking input.

The first approach was around the country, where we talked to people on the ground. We've also talked to the national aboriginal organizations. We will be starting, I think tomorrow, an electronic engagement on a number of issues, whereby people will continue to be given the opportunity to give input to us. We will take that and present that through the normal program development process in the government.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Okay. What typically happens in these engagement processes is that people are asked for input, but there's... We keep talking about the first nations education act, but what I've heard from first nations is that they saw the blueprint in July, and the draft legislation didn't reflect their input in any substantive kind of way.

People provide input, but they don't feel that the end product reflects their points of view. Is there going to be an opportunity for people to provide some additional feedback in that end product? You're talking about Internet engagement right now, but it's the end product that's more important for people.

Mr. James Sutherland: The end product goes through the normal decision-making process of the government and at some point the input stops.

Ms. Jean Crowder: With regard to SPF, you indicated the money is fully subscribed until 2015. I assume that's until March 2015.

Mr. James Sutherland: Yes. Sorry, I should have been clear.

Ms. Jean Crowder: No, that's okay

In effect for the next coming budget year April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015, there's no additional money in SPF. Is that what I'm hearing?

Mr. James Sutherland: No new projects can be initiated because the money is all allocated. The projects that are under way will continue.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Right, but no additional projects. Mr. Clarke referenced the fact that there are approximately 600 potential resource development projects out there that could come online over the next several years.

I recognize that you can't make a decision about funding allocation, but I think it's an important point to flag that the money is fully committed until March 2015, which is another budget year cycle out. We've got these projects being developed and if it seems they're being successful, it would seem to be a reasonable opportunity to look for some further successes in that area. Again, you can't comment on additional funding; I get that.

There's a lot more information that needs to come forward. Is that information with regard to input on the ASETS published on the website so people will know that they can electronically provide additional information?

• (1720)

Mr. James Sutherland: Yes, that will be. As well, the final report for our engagement notes, what they've told us, will be quality controlled with everybody who participated and a final report will be made available to all.

Ms. Jean Crowder: It would be important for us to get that out to our own stakeholders to make sure people are aware they can provide that additional input.

Thank you, Mr. Sutherland.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Thank you.

Back to Ms. McLeod.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do appreciate the comments my colleague made.

I do see one option, in terms of really supporting the communities as they move forward, which will be the Canada job grant once it's up and running, because I think it will be a tool for all the population of Canada to work together for the available jobs.

There's one area we haven't talked about, and maybe it's not your area of expertise. At some point we should get some officials from some of the diversification agencies on the support for small entrepreneurs and small businesses to get going. Again, there is the community futures program. I know we have some specific aboriginal-targeted community futures.

Can you talk briefly about anything that is above and beyond the community futures program in terms of, say, someone wants to start a restaurant or these small entrepreneurs who are looking for support to get going?

Mr. Allan Clarke: There's a network of aboriginal financial institutions that are modelled to some degree on the community futures program. In fact, some of them are funded through the community futures initiative. There's an organization called NACCA, the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association, that supports the network of AFIs, aboriginal financial institutions, across Canada. You might want to consider inviting them to talk about some of the opportunities for small and medium-size enterprises across Canada.

We do support that network through our department, through our sector. We provide somewhere in the range of between \$30 million and \$40 million per year to leverage additional access to capital for small and medium-size aboriginal businesses. By all accounts, if you speak to NACCA and the AFI, they would consider the program to be quite successful. It has managed to leverage a lot of activity.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Following on that, is there also some specific focus on tourism and tourism opportunities? Is that something supported through your department also? Again, is that something we should maybe explore a little bit?

Mr. Allan Clarke: The aboriginal financial institutions operate independent of government, so we support them in terms of their developmental lending requirements but it's up to them to analyze business cases and provide capital to the businesses themselves.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I had understood, but maybe I'm wrong, that there was a completely separate structure involved with tourism.

Ms. Sheilagh Murphy: Maybe it's the regional development agencies that you need to speak to, who often have tourism targeted as one of the investment areas they do, and they will do the work with enterprise in the private sector. It would be CanNor, and Western Economic Diversification, and so forth.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: That sounds like a good additional set of witnesses.

I want to talk a little bit about on and off reserve and the ASETS holders. Quite typically, and I'll use the community I represent as an example, there's certainly a large on-reserve population, but probably an equally large off-reserve population that's served by the Interior Indian Friendship Society. Using the Shuswap Nation as an ASETS holder, are the interior friendship centres, almost all ASETS holders, typically ASETS holders? You have, as I say, fairly large populations and perhaps more off reserve than on reserve. Are there any sort of comparatives in terms of support?

Mr. James Sutherland: The friendship centres in and of themselves are.... We have an agreement with the national association for policy work. In Ontario, there's a specific friendship centre ASET agreement itself, but in most other places, the friendship centres usually work in collaboration with an ASET holder. It might be a point of service or it might even be a

subagreement, but it is usually not the direct agreement holder with us.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: In that case, and again I'll use a local example, the off-reserve friendship centre would refer to the Shuswap Nation travel council, the ASET holder that's under that umbrella.

Mr. James Sutherland: If the ASET holder is a subagreement holder from either that particular ASET or another one, our expectation would be that they would do the services as they have been hired to do. If they are not, then we would hope that they would make a referral to the correct place. I think that the communication is usually strong enough that if they went to a friendship centre door rather than an ASET door, they would be directed to the ASET door.

● (1725)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Again, this is of course very exploratory—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): You have five seconds.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Then I'll leave my exploration for another day, thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims): Okay, thank you.

I want to thank staff from the department for making presentations to us.

Now we're going to ceremoniously thank you and ask you to leave because we're going to go in camera to discuss some committee business. The usual suspects get to stay while we go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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