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Chair

Mr. James Rajotte

Standing Committee on Finance

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. This is meeting number 29 of the Standing Committee on Finance. In accordance with the orders of the day, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study of youth employment in Canada. I want to thank our six witnesses for appearing before us this afternoon.

In order, we have, as an individual, Professor Wayne Lewchuk, lead investigator of Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, from McMaster University. We also have Mr. Noel Joe, the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council co-chair.

If I'm pronouncing any names incorrectly, please do correct me.

Also, then, from Career Edge Organization, we have the president, Naguib Gouda.

Mr. Naguib Gouda (President, Career Edge Organization): It's "Naguib". Pretend there are two Es.

The Chair: Thank you. The last name is correct? Okay.

From the Dauphin Friendship Centre, we have the executive director, Mr. Jeremy Smith. From Habitat for Humanity Canada, we have the vice-president, Mr. Jason Kuzminski. From Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services, we have Ms. Beedahbin, or Dawn, Desmoulin...?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin (Communications Officer, Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services): Yes. It's Desmoulin. Very good.

The Chair: Do you prefer to go by Dawn?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: It's easier, yes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: All right, and you're the communications officer.

Welcome. Thank you.

You each have five minutes for your opening statements, and then we'll have questions from all the members.

We'll begin with Professor Lewchuk, please.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk (Professor, Lead Investigator, Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario, McMaster University, As an Individual): Thank you for having me here today.

I am here today speaking on behalf of the Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario research group, PEPSO,

which I co-lead with Michelynn Lafleche from United Way Toronto. PEPSO is a joint university-community research group based at McMaster and United Way Toronto.

The focus of PEPSO's research is the impact of changing labour market outcomes and the shift to less secure forms of employment on household well-being and community participation. Based on a survey of over 4,000 individuals in the GTA-Hamilton region, we released a report titled "It's More Than Poverty" in early 2013, which documented the social implications of changing work patterns.

If, as many now argue, we are moving away from a labour market where the majority of workers are employed in stable long-term employment relationships to one of less permanent short-term employment relationships, then the findings in "It's More than Poverty" foreshadow a very different society than the one we live in today.

It is through the lens of our report that I wish to address the issue of youth employment.

When speaking of youth employment, we are immediately attracted to the exact opposite: the high level of youth unemployment. Last month, 13.6% of young people aged 15 to 24 were unemployed, double the national average.

While this is undoubtedly a concern, we need to be even more concerned about the characteristics of the pool of jobs that the other 86% of employed young workers share, and the kinds of jobs young people will move into as they grow older.

While we can only speculate on what the future holds, the evidence is clear that young workers are off to a slow start compared to earlier generations, and the changes we are seeing in adult employment today point to a very different future for young workers when compared to their parents. There are many good jobs available to young people today, but on average, young people start at lower salaries and are less likely to find a job with long-term prospects.

It is this shift to precarious employment that was the focus of "It's More Than Poverty". Only half of our sample aged 25 to 65 were in full-time jobs with one employer, jobs that paid benefits and that they expected to hold a year from now. Even fewer newcomers and racialized workers were in such jobs.

These were exactly the kinds of jobs that much of the Canadian economy was built around in the post-World War II period. Our survey participants not employed on a full-time basis were paid less, were less likely to receive benefits or a pension plan, and were less likely to receive training from their employer. They were more likely to delay family formation and more likely to report anxiety at home, and they faced more challenges in participating in community life. This is the likely future of many young workers today.

In light of these changes, we need to be bold. We need to think about what we're doing in the next decade and how it will shape the future of Canada. We need to re-evaluate how we regulate labour markets and support families.

The old model of one worker per household, in a permanent secure job with benefits, is becoming less common. The old model of unions organized around one employer and one workplace is becoming less applicable as workplace communities are fractured by temporary work arrangements, outsourcing, and rapid technical change.

An unemployment system designed to support people during temporary periods of slack activity has become less relevant to workers moving between jobs on a regular basis. A pension program relying on employer-funded pension plans is less viable when workers no longer have a long-term commitment to a single employer. A training program relying on employers to train junior workers no longer works when the junior workers are temp workers or contract workers and the employer has no expectation that they will be tomorrow's senior workers.

It's unlikely that we'll ever go back to a 1970s labour market of permanent full-time employment with benefits and of households organized around a primary breadwinner. What is needed are new institutional arrangements that reflect the changing nature of labour market outcomes.

Countries such as Denmark have pioneered a system referred to as "flexicurity": flexible employment for employers, but generous income support and retraining for those moving between jobs. Denmark's economy is highly productive and innovative, boasting one of the most satisfied workforces in Europe despite also featuring one of the highest levels of job churning in Europe.

Over the next 12 months, the PEPSO research group will bring together a panel of employers, unions, employees, community representatives, and academics to discuss changes made necessary by the shift to less permanent employment. Our discussions will be based on a document we have prepared that reviews the hundreds of proposals and implemented policies that address the changing nature of labour markets. While our policy research is in its preliminary stages, it has already revealed dozens of innovative solutions, solutions that we look forward to sharing with you in the near future.

Thank you.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now hear from the Assembly of First Nations.

Mr. Noel Joe (Co-Chair, National Youth Council, Assembly of First Nations): Thank you.

I want to thank the chair of the finance committee for inviting the Assembly of First Nations to present on this very important study in regard to youth employment.

I would like to thank the Algonquin peoples for allowing us to undertake business on their unceded territory.

My name is Noel Joe. I'm the male co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council. I also sit as a councillor for the Miawpukek First Nation in Newfoundland.

Before I talk about my own experiences, let me give you a brief national overview on first nation youth employment.

The first nations population is young and growing fast. Fully half of our population of 930,000 is under the age of 25. To put things in perspective, there are more first nation citizens than the population of greater Ottawa, including Kanata. There are over 100,000 more of our people than the entire population of New Brunswick, and you could replace the entire regional municipality of Halifax with a first nation population under the age of 25.

First nations need immediate investments in order to reach employment parity with the rest of Canada. By doing so, it is estimated that by 2026 first nations will contribute a further \$400 billion to Canada's economy, while saving at least \$115 billion in costs associated with poverty.

For the past decade, the AFN has been calling for additional investments in education and skills training. In our submission for the 2014 federal budget, we have requested an additional \$500 million per year over the next five years in order to ensure that first nation training and employment organizations, as well as first nation economic institutions, are properly equipped to provide business supports and skills training to first nation citizens.

Since 1991 first nation citizens across Canada have counted on their local aboriginal skills and employment training strategy holders, or ASETS holders, to provide opportunities for training, education, skills development, and employment. For many of our peoples struggling to seek a way out of poverty, our ASETS holders are the first people they turn to for assistance.

The assistance ranges from support for child care, literacy, and life skills, a variety of trades, and first aid and safety training. However, it should be noted that basic skills training, along with upgrading to specialized and technical training, requires more time and financial resources in order to move a client from his or her current situation to employment. Regardless of location—rural or urban—each ASETS holder occupies the best position to both understand and serve the unique job market needs, whether it be in mining, transportation, energy, forestry, or tourism, or in dozens of other industry sectors.

As a band member in my home community of Miawpukek First Nation who participated in a training program through the local ASETS holder, I can personally attest to the effectiveness of the ASETS program. I spent five years in an aspect of the program that gave me the opportunity to work for my band, develop the skills and tools I need to support my community, and experience the growth that made me a viable candidate for band council, a position which I currently hold.

Since 1996 ASETS holders have not seen any funding increases, despite a growing population and growing client demands. As it stands right now, the cost of doing nothing will result in a growing annual multi-billion dollar burden in terms of dealing with the social impacts of poverty and despair.

The five-year ASETS program is coming up for renewal at the end of March 2015. The AFN has been communicating with Employment and Social Development Canada officials, as well as Minister Jason Kenney, on the importance of increased funding and support for ASETS. We hope the finance committee will recommend that the ASETS program be renewed and strengthened in order to meet the growing demands for skills training of first nation youth. The price of adequate funding will be paid back in the building of a dynamic future for the first peoples of our land and for all Canadians.

Two years ago, at the 2012 crown-first nations gathering, Prime Minister Harper echoed our goals during his opening speech. He said:

...such will be the demand for labour in our future economy that we are positioned today to unlock the enormous economic potential of First Nations peoples, and to do so in a way that meets our mutual goals. Canada's growing and vibrant economy will require a skilled and growing labour force in every region: urban, rural and remote. Aboriginal peoples are Canada's youngest population. It is therefore in all of our interests to see aboriginal people educated, skilled and employed...

● (1540)

Unfortunately, as it stands right now, the majority of first nations youth have not graduated high school. Until such time as our high school graduation rate equals Canadian levels, more resources, such as essential pre-employment essential skills training, will be needed for clients who lack high school completion. More resources will also be needed for child care, as there are many young single mothers and fathers who are my age and much younger.

In the meantime, I welcome questions from this committee. I look forward to the day when first nations are no longer called the labour force of the future but Canada's new working class. With the proper investment and support by the federal government, we can meet our mutual goals. We can build stronger communities and a stronger Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now hear from Career Edge, please.

Mr. Naguib Gouda: Mr. Chair, my name is Naguib Gouda, and I am president of Career Edge.

First of all, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to appear as a witness before the Standing Committee on Finance as part of its study on youth employment in Canada. This subject ties very closely

to the work that Career Edge does, and I feel privileged to share both our insights and our history at today's hearing.

Career Edge was created in 1996 by a group of business leaders from a number of prominent enterprises in response to a finding in the mid-1990s that more than half a million Canadian graduates were either unemployed or underemployed. Since then, these founding organizations have been joined by over 1,000 additional employers to provide close to 12,000 recent university and college graduates, including those with self-declared disabilities, and internationally qualified professionals with career-launching paid internship opportunities.

I'm proud to say that the Government of Canada has been a great partner of our organization, taking on over 2,400 Career Edge interns as part of the federal public service youth internship program between 1997 and 2000. This program was critical to Career Edge's success in its fledgling years, and has greatly contributed to our long-term sustainability. Furthermore, the Government of Ontario has taken on close to 700 of our paid interns since 2004. Nearly half of those were federally funded.

Today's levels of youth employment are reminiscent of those when Career Edge was founded. We believe that working in collaboration with the Government of Canada we can once again play an important role in helping young Canadians find meaningful work that is consistent with their skills and education, by providing a much-needed boost to their career and quality of life and to the country's economic development.

Although many of the findings or the comments in the report are statistics that you all know, I just want to highlight a couple of key insights.

First, youth unemployment is nearly double that of the general population. Part-time rates are 30% higher for youth compared with the general population. In terms of Career Edge's own database of recent graduates, it has shown no worthy fluctuations in Canada's youth labour market. Education levels of Career Edge's registrants, who are the people we help, have significantly increased since 2008, with recent grads with bachelor's degrees returning to school to pursue a master's degree or a post-degree certificate when faced with little or no job prospects.

From our 17-year history, we know that paid internships work. As stated on page 4 of our report, more than half of Career Edge interns are hired by the host employers at the end of their internship. The majority of the rest find meaningful employment elsewhere within six months of finishing that internship.

While investing in the creation of internship opportunities that promote greater levels of youth employment prospects, we recommend that the government enact federal legislation to the Canada Labour Code that specifically outlines the conditions of internships across all of Canada's provinces and territories. This will ensure fairness, and the protection of young workers, while giving employers firm guidelines for incorporating internships and internship programs into their recruitment, retention, and succession planning initiatives.

In addition to the above, we recommend that the Canadian government provide funding to employers to encourage the creation of paid internship opportunities.

With reference to chapter 3.1 of Canada's economic plan 2014, Career Edge endorses the federal government's plans to focus investments on improving the youth employment strategy by supporting internships in high-demand fields and supporting internships in small and medium-sized enterprises.

Thank you once more, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance as part of its study on youth employment in Canada.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now go to the Dauphin Friendship Centre, please.

Mr. Jeremy Smith (Executive Director, Dauphin Friendship Centre): Thank you, House of Commons finance committee members, for the honour of coming to Ottawa to present to you on an issue of importance for our entire country.

Today I will share with you information on a provincial survey that we were involved in undertaking, the resulting successful program that was developed in response to this survey, and our recommendations for improving youth employment outcomes.

In 2009 we embarked on completing a local survey to determine directly from youth what was preventing them from fully participating in the economy. It targeted youth 15 to 30 years of age who were not attending school or employed. We also completed a survey with local businesses to see why they were not hiring these youths. With guidance from a great team of Service Canada staff and community partners who assisted us, the results of the survey were unveiled in 2010.

After our survey was successfully completed, Service Canada contacted our organization wanting to replicate the survey process in rural and northern communities around the province of Manitoba. The provincial survey obtained information from more than 500 businesses and from 1,700 youth who were unable to integrate fully into the workforce or further their education. In September 2011 the final research report from the new comprehensive survey was published.

The findings offered a great deal of insight into how some youth face major barriers to entering the workforce in our province, including lack of education, a family history of unemployment, inadequate accessibility to child care, and having little employment experience. Also, they were generally discouraged due to a lack of family and community supports. These findings were consistent

throughout the province regardless of whether the youth lived in a larger rural centre or a smaller northern community.

Employers reported difficulties finding qualified employees despite there being unemployed youth. They also identified that there was a lack of youth willing to work, a lack of workplace skills, lifestyle barriers, and other issues that were a challenge when hiring youth. They also stated that general skills, including customer service, verbal communication, and interpersonal and organizational skills, were important for their business, yet youth seemed to lack these skills.

A positive outcome of the survey was that in 2010 we established a youth skills development program. Partners included Service Canada and provincial departments, including MB4Youth, Workplace Education Manitoba, Neighbourhoods Alive!, and the Dauphin Friendship Centre. We developed a curriculum that addresses the lack of essential skills identified in the survey and provided participants with group-based programming and individual instruction and counselling.

The barriers to employment are addressed in a 16-week classroom program, which prepares the youths for an eight-week paid placement in which they can put their new-found skills to practical use. After the completion of the program, the participants are monitored for 16 weeks to ensure they have maintained employment.

In the four years of offering the program, we have successfully and consistently achieved a success rate of at least 70%. This year's success rate to date has been 90%.

We believe that encouraging essential skill development is the future in assisting unemployed youth to be better prepared to participate in our economy and is important for many reasons. Youth who lack decent work skills early in life often show unsuitable employment behaviours later in life. They don't contribute fully to the Canada Pension Plan, and their social issues can be compounded as they go through life. Unfortunately, these barriers often become a cycle and are passed on to the children of these youths, making it difficult for them to lift themselves out of poverty.

Of major importance in finding a solution to engage all youth in the economy is establishing community partnerships. Trying to help youth overcome their employment barriers shouldn't fall on the shoulders of one entity to solve. It needs to be a collaborative effort by entire communities.

The solution to addressing youth employment also needs to come from and have the support of federal, provincial and local levels of government. We need to be proactive in our pursuit of getting youth involved in the workforce, especially as our population ages.

In order to improve youth employment outcomes in Canada, a national youth employment strategy needs to include provisions for youth for essential skills and literacy training, wraparound supports, and socially innovative programming like that offered by our friendship centre.

•(1550)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Jeremy Smith: Further, this strategy needs to support the meaningful matching of youth employment aims and employer needs, as we have done at the Dauphin Friendship Centre in our 2011 survey, which I've described.

I recognize that there are many other examples of youth employment programs and strategies across the country, and I'm hopeful that the issue can be addressed, as this is key to the future of the Canadian economy.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

We'll go to Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Kuzminski, please.

Mr. Jason Kuzminski (Vice-President, Habitat for Humanity Canada): Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity and invitation to share what Habitat for Humanity is doing to help train youth with the skills they need to join Canada's labour market.

Many of you are familiar with Habitat for Humanity as a leading developer of affordable home ownership in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Habitat for Humanity affiliates across Canada help low-income families build safe, decent homes for them to purchase at payments they can afford.

[*English*]

Habitat for Humanity affiliates across Canada help hard-working low-income families build safe, decent homes for them to purchase for payments they can afford. Our traditional approach has been to enlist volunteers and donors from business and faith communities, as well as neighbours, who are touched by the need, want to help, and recognize how Habitat home ownership helps break the cycle of poverty permanently.

We will always offer this opportunity to community volunteers, and I invite community leaders like the members on this committee to come swing a hammer with us this summer and build alongside a partner family whose lives you'll help transform, but the reason I'm here today is to remark upon what has happened as Habitat affiliates diversify the approach to how we build our homes.

In recent years, several Habitat affiliates partnered with local colleges, trade schools and skills centres, and high schools to offer Habitat home builds as a living classroom for training youth in building trades and other skills that lead to apprenticeships. In 2013, over 1,500 students earned credits in carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and other construction trades taught on our home builds.

This works out to approximately 900,000 hours of training taught on Habitat home builds, most of which is counted toward apprenticeships. Not only are these students given valuable practical training, but they're also given an opportunity to meet and work with the families who will own the homes they're building.

Our success rate for retaining these students in trades programs and seeing them go on to trades is between 80% and 90%. Anecdotally, many of the students say that it's the human experience, more than anything else, that motivates them to continue pursuing a career in a trade. When asked why and what that meant, the common reply is that they come from families that are in circumstance similar to those of the families they're helping and who they met on their home build.

There are several reasons why Habitat for Humanity has moved into the direction of skills training partnerships.

Some affiliates did it out of necessity to add new volunteers so they can scale growth in homes built and families served. Others did it out of our own sense of corporate social responsibility or a duty to leave a legacy that goes beyond the homes we build and the families we serve. Still others saw it as part of a plan to attract new resources and donors interested in supporting education and youth, and not just affordable housing.

We understand that if you poll Canadians on their top 10 priorities, affordable housing sometimes comes in at around 11, but jobs and skills are always consistently at one or two. Creating skills training benefits and affordable homes out of the same dollar is something that we knew we could do. Our investment in these partnerships has begun to pay dividends.

In Canada's economic action plan 2013, Prime Minister Harper and his government acknowledged the success of Habitat for Humanity Canada in leveraging skills training from affordable housing dollars. We thank him and we thank you for that.

In Saskatchewan, Premier Wall has been a leader in Canada by doubling his investment in Habitat homes, which his housing minister, the Honourable June Draude, has said is attributable to the skills training partnerships that we've leveraged and the results we've proven out there. Minister Draude and her government are eager to explore with the federal government what other ways there are to leverage programs that achieve results for multiple priorities, and I thank her for her leadership.

Status of Women Canada's support for Women Building Futures, a skills program based in Alberta and targeted for women, also benefited Habitat Edmonton and the families they serve. Habitat affiliates in Manitoba, Prince Albert, Kingston, and the national capital region have also partnered with CORCAN to give federal offenders a second chance by learning a skilled trade and building a home that gives a low-income family their second chance.

The Canadian public is excited when we tell them what we're doing, and many are eager to support us with funds to enable us to grow these partnerships. Given the impact we have on government priorities for youth skills development and affordable housing, we look to governments at all levels to recognize these returns by investing in our ability to grow these programs.

Merci.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now go to Ms. Desmoulin.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Thank you on behalf of KKETS, the Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Service, more easily pronounced as "KKETS". The Matawa employment and training service would like to thank you for involving us in this process on youth unemployment.

KKETS is the ASETS agreement holder for Matawa First Nations. Matawa First Nations is a tribal council that represents five remote communities and four road-access communities.

It is no secret that the aboriginal population is the fastest-growing and youngest segment of the Canadian population. In fact, between 2001 and 2006, the aboriginal population grew four times more than the non-aboriginal population and, with a median age of 26.5 years, it is 13 years younger on average than the rest of the Canadian population.

Over the next 10 years, 400,000 aboriginal Canadians will reach an age to enter into the labour market, which represents a significant opportunity to help meet Canada's long-term demand for workers. Matawa First Nations must take advantage of this unique opportunity by preparing our people through education and training that will see great returns in the near future.

In order to create, develop, and implement training programs for Matawa First Nations, KKETS has taken on the role of performing a number of research projects within our Matawa communities. One of the initial ones was the implementation of a skills inventory. The skills inventory was basically a snapshot of each of our first nations. It collected data that identified attributes such as registered membership on or off reserve, gender, age, level of education, training achieved, employment status, and number in household.

The empirical data from these surveys was synthesized and used to develop a skills inventory. From there, we were able to take a look at the skill gaps and educational gaps within our first nations and where we need to go from there: what do we have to do to fill these gaps in order to create a regional training plan?

A number of identified gaps in training and education had surfaced, to be a starting point for future planning. Within each of our first nations, it has become apparent that there are gaps in education attainment, leading to a lack of specific training certification. Although the nine first nations are all under the Matawa tribal council, they are also very distinct as individual communities, with similar training and educational demands.

Currently, Matawa First Nations has a population of over 10,000 members on reserve, with a 70% to 75% unemployment rate,

approximately 65% of which, in our population of 10,000, is attributed to our youth. Within our first nations, the majority of employment for youth comes from summer student employment programming that prepares youth with job readiness skills and provides an income for the majority of the secondary and returning post-secondary students in our communities throughout the summer.

These jobs of course are focused on band infrastructure and community capacity building. These positions are minimum wage and last for the duration of summer break only. Other than that, there is no option for employment within our first nations for our youth in Matawa.

Another research study done at the same time as this skills inventory was the qualitative research that was done with Matawa youth. A session happened in each first nation in visits with a group of youths aged 16 and older. The whole purpose was to give them a voice to be heard and to have them become more engaged in their futures.

Discussion topics ranged from community politics and drugs and alcohol to what they desired for their communities' well-being. The report spoke to the reality of life in our first nations for the present youth generation. The testimonies shared were from groups of 15 to 25 youths. Recommendations coming out of this were based on categories that were prevalent through the report: training and education, cultural issues, and health and wellness.

Youths spoke about the challenges they faced when they tried to leave their community to attend post-secondary school. Even after graduating from high school, they encountered new challenges that school had not prepared them for, such as work at a post-secondary level. So KKETS has developed pilot programs such as ASAP, the aboriginal skills advancement pilot program, whereby we were able to recruit clients from each first nation to get their OSSD. Since its inception in 2012, we have seen 63 out of 100 clients this year graduate with an OSSD. This week was their graduation.

• (1600)

Overall, we've had processes that we've been taking on, and things that we've been doing are the various studies in order to meet the demands of the labour market that's coming forward. We all know that Matawa First Nations are in the centre of what's going on in the north, which is the Ring of Fire, so right now we need to bring forward all of our resources and our partnerships with the various industries to create a workforce that's going to meet the demand.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Colleagues, we'll begin members' questions with Mr. Cullen, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses.

I represent a very large riding in northwestern British Columbia, in Skeena. It may be somewhat similar to the situation with Matawa and the Ring of Fire. There are a lot of prospects, in resource development in particular, and 35% to 40% of the population is first nations. A large proportion of that is young first nations, and too large a portion of that is unemployed.

I want to talk about this in a more holistic approach. We can talk about program funding and different aspects of how to get young aboriginal people to work and secured in work, but I want to talk about the whole person, because oftentimes the barrier that gets placed in front of young aboriginal people isn't that there isn't a job available somewhere but that there are steps and barriers in the way. I want to start with that as a principle.

Is any one of our witnesses today familiar with the cultural connections for aboriginal youth program?

Mr. Smith, you're nodding.

The challenge I have with the government is that when I talk to young first nations groups, they talk about how the funding is intermittent. There are programs that are set up and then cancelled. They get some effectiveness, they run for two years, the names are changed...there's a lot of uncertainty. They're asking for long, stable....

I think this connections program speaks to something you said just in the middle of your piece, Dawn, about the barriers, about when a young person has a job and moves, particularly from a small town into a camp life or into a city.

Can you talk about specifically what you find and what some programs can address in removing those barriers?

• (1605)

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Absolutely.

What we've been seeing is that within our first nations, especially the remote communities, there is no opportunity for high school education, for secondary education. What they have up there are elementary schools. The other option would be Wahsa, which is correspondence, so we're seeing youth graduating from grade 12 and then moving to the city. They're basically leaving their home at the age of 14 and living with strangers in order to go to a high school.

Not only do they have culture shock, but they're also away from home. They're away from their families. And then a lot of times they're lacking the support that they're needing to move forward with their education, whether that be tutoring, assistance, or getting around in the city—especially Thunder Bay. They're coming from one of these remote communities like Webequie, for example, or Eabametoong. A lot of them don't leave their communities. When they do come, they have no idea or a sense of direction about where they're going in the city of Thunder Bay.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: So a program like the cultural connections, which was meant to be that bridge, meant to say “okay, here is help getting around with transit, here are some of the pitfalls to avoid when you get to the city or get to a larger community”, has not been renewed. Those are programs the government has not pursued.

Is there any evidence those programs were not helping? This is what I'm trying to understand.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: I've never heard of the cultural connections program, to be honest—

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Yes?

Mr. Smith?.

I'm sorry to interrupt, Dawn, but I want to come back to you about something else.

Mr. Smith, you nodded in hearing about the program. Can you tell me a bit about it?

Mr. Jeremy Smith: Yes. Cultural connections for aboriginal youth was a program that designated through the National Association of Friendship Centres. Unfortunately, it was not offered to any on-reserve populations. It was more for the urban aboriginal population. One of the criteria was that you had to have a minimum of 1,000 people within your community, so many of the rural and northern communities didn't qualify for the program. Only rural and southern urban centres were eligible.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Right. Is that a defined gap or barrier that exists right now between young aboriginal people, particularly folks coming off more remote, smaller communities, in that transition, whether it's to a high school or a training program or even beyond that, now getting into a job...?

There's that culture shock element that you talk about, Dawn. Is there a role, first of all, that the federal government can play? Or is that role being fulfilled satisfactorily right now?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Absolutely, I would completely agree with that program coming back out. I would be in full support. Something like this.... Or even to be able to look at the planning or the curriculum and how it was laid out or implemented, and to be able to adapt and adopt that program for our Matawa First Nations, would definitely be beneficial.

I'm seeing right now that it's a double-edged sword, because you end up leaving your community and you come to Thunder Bay, and what kinds of resources do you have in Thunder Bay? Technically, how do you qualify for that funding? How do you qualify for that cultural connection for aboriginal youth? You wouldn't be able to. But you need it: you're living here temporarily for the school year. What are your options? Technically, you don't have any options.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Let me pull back one step further. It's a question to you, Noel.

We talk about the wholeness of the young person and the completeness of the family and the community that surrounds.... I'm not sure if it applies as much on the east coast, but certainly in the west there was a program established called the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, and it existed for nine or ten years. It was a program that was meant to deal with the effects of residential schools on survivors, and that generational impact that had been recognized, which didn't just exist for those who survived the trauma and the horrors of those schools. It obviously affected their kids, and then their kids were then affected, so we're still living with this. That program was also cut a couple of years ago.

Is it too much of a stretch to say that when you take away those healing programs that are talking about those events and making the person more whole that it's not connected to the success of young aboriginal people when they go out to seek the training, secure that job, and be successful in the workplace? Am I making too much of a leap?

• (1610)

The Chair: Just a brief response, please.

Mr. Noel Joe: We need those programs. We need the healing programs. I think it's a necessity to bridge that gap to have our youth go and seek employment elsewhere, because there are a lot of barriers there as well. We need those programs for the healing foundation as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

We'll go to Mr. Saxton, please.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for being here today.

My first question is for Noel Joe and the Assembly of First Nations.

Noel, as you probably know, our government recently introduced and announced the first nations control of first nations education act. This will provide young first nations people with access to education systems on reserve that are comparable to those that are available in provincial and territorial school systems. Do you agree that the government's \$1.9-billion investment in first nations education will have a significant impact on employment opportunities for young aboriginal Canadians?

Mr. Noel Joe: I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Do you think this program... It's a significant program of \$1.9-billion worth of funding for education on reserve. Do you think this will have a positive impact on young aboriginal Canadians and their ability to get jobs after they've been educated on reserve?

Mr. Noel Joe: I believe that they want the money, yes. I do believe so.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you.

Dawn, how about you? Are you familiar with the program?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: I'm familiar with the changes that are coming about and what that is expected to do.

I definitely agree that, yes, for local control of first nations it should be up to our first nation communities to be able to do that. However, I think... It's definitely going to make a change for our future if the dollars are spent where they're supposed to be. That's the key.

People can do what they need to do with the money, but it has to be spent in the best way possible in order to provide for the future, in order to be able to implement programs that are going to create awareness for our youth in future careers. We have a mining industry that's coming up, and it's going to be everywhere. A lot of our youth

have absolutely no idea of what's going on or what's happening. They have no awareness. These types of programs to create and build awareness are going to be really beneficial in order for our youth to be able to understand that these are the kinds of careers that are out there.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: I'm glad you brought that up, because in British Columbia we have the Aboriginal Mine Training Association. I went to one of their graduation ceremonies last summer. It was really remarkable to see the success they had in training young aboriginal Canadians to be successful in the mining industry. They're talking about income prospects quadrupling. These were young Canadians who were looking at incomes, salaries, of around \$13,000 to \$15,000 before they did the program, and over \$50,000 after they did the program.

I don't know if you're familiar with the Aboriginal Mine Training Association—

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: No, I'm not.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: —but especially with your Ring of Fire opportunities coming forward, I highly recommend that you search them out on the Internet and get in touch with them, because that's a great opportunity. Also, the federal government is funding this association as well.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Great.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: My next question is for Jason Kuzminski from Habitat for Humanity.

You mentioned, Jason, how young Canadians are getting the apprenticeship training necessary to work toward certification on your job sites, on your construction sites. I'm sure you're familiar with our new \$100-million Canada apprentice loan program that was just launched in budget 2014. How do you think that might also assist young Canadians who are seeking apprenticeships?

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: Well, to be frank, Habitat isn't one of the colleges that would actually benefit directly from that. That's really more an answer to be given by our partners, to see how they're tapping into that resource in being able to produce those funds, which we would then leverage to create more of these opportunities. I actually have limited familiarity with the funding.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: For some of the young Canadians who are working on your job sites and who are apprentices, I imagine that this will give them another opportunity to continue their apprenticeships so they can get their certifications that they need so badly.

• (1615)

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: Again, maybe just to clarify, most of our programs are of course for students who have not quite reached the point of apprenticeships, so they're on their pathway. I think the funding you're talking about would actually benefit them at the tail end of the work they're doing with us.

Some of our students are high school students who are in dual credit programs that earn them credits in their high school and into the college, should they go on to study in a college. Several of them are in skills training programs and colleges. That's where we've been able to leverage the dual benefit of an affordable home and skills training.

At the tail end of that, again, many of those students are choosing to go on to apprenticeships. I'm quite certain the funding you're talking about would assist them to move ahead in that chosen career.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: You're giving them that first opportunity to make a choice. You're exposing them to a potential career opportunity by giving them the opportunity to work on your job sites.

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: Absolutely. One thing I know—and certainly this would be a conversation more with provincial governments—is that every government, at every level, struggles to attract and retain students in skilled trades. I often wonder what would we be able to do if they wrapped up the budget they spend on advertising to attract and retain and just gave it to Habitat. I think our success rate would be very high. But it's that kind of ability to leverage those benefits and to work creatively and constructively with the resources we get, whether it comes from government or by private donation, that's fundamentally our goal.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you.

My last question is for Mr. Gouda from Career Edge.

Mr. Gouda, you talked about paid internships in your opening statement. I'm sure you're familiar with our government's recently announced \$55 million for paid internships. I'm just wondering how you think that could impact young Canadians' abilities to get internships and, ultimately, to get the jobs they're looking for.

The Chair: Just a brief response, please.

Mr. Naguib Gouda: I am familiar with it. It's a positive step and we'll be working with the government to see how to make that work.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saxton.

We'll go to Mr. Brison, please.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to each of you for your testimony today. It's very helpful as part of this study.

The labour market agreements with the provinces funded a variety of programs across the country that were approaching similar issues in different ways, but the common thread was that they were helping people get the skills they need to enter the workforce and to participate in the economy.

In Nova Scotia, 60 groups lost their funding as of March 31 when the labour market agreement funding from the federal government ended. The provincial government has now offered, for a period, bridge funding of several million dollars. For instance, some of these groups were helping people who had dropped out of high school to get their GEDs, such that they could enter training or the workforce. Some groups were helping with basic literacy.

Is this something you're seeing in other parts of the country as well, that some of these groups that were previously receiving federal funding as part of the labour market agreements have been rendered vulnerable by the decision to withdraw that funding as of March 31?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: One of my research partners is the United Way of Toronto. Of course, they associate with many of the

organizations that receive that sort of funding, and certainly they are concerned. But I think also that as an organization there's a concern that while obviously we need these kinds of bridges to give young people these kinds of skills so they can compete in the labour market fairly with other people, I think we have to also be very cautious that we're not building very nice bridges to dead ends.

Certainly one of the concerns there is that we also have to think about what kinds of jobs these kids are going to be getting. Are we simply increasing the competition for a shrinking pool of good jobs? I think that's something that we have to be concerned about as well.

Hon. Scott Brison: Thank you.

Any other comments from other parts of the country? Would you have seen similar challenges in other regions? Dauphin, Manitoba?

Mr. Jeremy Smith: It has been the experience in Manitoba, and we know of several different programs around the province that had the exact same situation happen. Some of them have closed. I think we're very fortunate that the Province of Manitoba does support adult literacy and learning. Getting your GED or adult upgrading education is already paid for by the province, but unfortunately Manitoba did not provide the bridge funding, so many of the programs closed or had to find alternative sources of funding.

• (1620)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Gouda, I'm very impressed with Career Edge's model and success rate. You have a 56% success rate in terms of your interns being hired by companies. The TD Economics report on youth unemployment and underemployment tells us there's potentially a \$23-billion cost to the economy over the next decade or so as a result of sustained youth unemployment.

Should we be measuring or considering that cost when we're considering investments? Mr. Saxton mentioned paid internships and the federal government funding. Should we be perhaps increasing that, given the risk of significant economic loss, a multi-billion dollar loss, as a result of this youth unemployment and underemployment situation?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: Absolutely. I think we all know the demographics and the fact that pretty soon all of us baby boomers will be retiring. This is about helping what we do, and what you're talking about, Mr. Brison. It's about launching people's careers sooner and turning them into taxpayers instead of tax burdens and allowing them to start contributing, to start learning, so they can take over from those of us who will be retiring in the coming years.

Connecting them with full-time meaningful work experience shortly after graduation we believe greatly affects their own success and prosperity, and that has a very positive impact on Canada's society and economy, so yes.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Joe or Ms. Desmoulin, we're told by the economists that having a young population is an economic advantage, or can be an economic advantage, and I guess that's contingent on that young population having the skills. The youngest and fastest-growing population in Canada is in aboriginal and first nations communities.

If we're getting it right in terms of education and training, that would be a huge advantage for us economically, but we're not, so it's a big risk. I'm told that there are 300,000 or 400,000 young aboriginal and first nations members entering the workforce in the next—

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Four hundred thousand.

Hon. Scott Brison: Four hundred thousand entering the workforce in the next 10 years. Given that there's I think only a 30% high school graduation rate, should we be closing immediately that funding gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal schools? Shouldn't that be a pretty clear investment that we ought to make post-haste?

Mr. Noel Joe: I think we should be considering closing that gap pretty soon—sooner. When we look at our rates on reserve for diplomas we see that we're at somewhere around the 14.4% rate, compared to first nations off reserve, where we have 28.9%. This goes back to the 2006 census. Then compared to the non-aboriginal population, we're hovering at around 39.1%, and it goes on...it goes up. That's no certificate, diploma, or degree, compared to the high school certificate equivalent, where we're looking at 36.8% on reserve and 61.6% off reserve when compared to the non-aboriginal population at 66.8%. Looking at apprenticeships or trade certificates or diplomas, on reserve, again, it's anywhere from 48%...to 67.5% off reserve.

The Chair: Unfortunately, you're out of time, Mr. Brison.

Mr. Joe, did you want to finish up?

Mr. Noel Joe: There's a steady curve there that we should look at.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brison.

We'll go to Mr. Keddy, please.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our witnesses.

We've been at this study now for a couple of weeks, and a number of messages keep coming back. One of them is to match the skills young people learn in school to the skills employers are looking for. I'm an optimist, so I think we're getting a little better at that.

But at the same time, we hear a lot of reports that the secondary and post-secondary education many young men and women are receiving is not necessarily what their future employers are looking for. That's a point I want to throw out there with a question for anyone to take a stab at: how do we do a better job of that matching?

The other question I have concerns the challenge of remote first nations communities. There are many remote communities in the country of Canada, but there are more remote first nations communities. For those communities that can offer anything beyond junior high, there is the added cost of it. Also, when young men or

women leave junior high to go to high school, what is the quality of that education? That's a recurring theme in this: is the quality at the level it needs to be? Do we need to become better at delivery, and if so, how?

Anyone can take a stab at these questions.

You were nodding, so go ahead.

• (1625)

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Well, I would definitely say that we aren't meeting the educational needs of our youth in our communities. Elementary school education is not meeting the needs for our youth to ready themselves to go on to high school. We have youth leaving the community from high school, young people who have graduated. Some communities have high schools, so they have graduated at their high school in their community.

But then they go to post-secondary and they think: "Boy, I have a grade 12 diploma. The world is my oyster." They leave the community, go to post-secondary, and have not a clue. They cannot compete or complete any kind of higher-level post-secondary education. Their skills are not there. Their foundational math and English language skills are not there.

In grades 6 and 3, they're still doing the testing for these students. The provincial testing is still mandatory for our first nations. They're still doing those to see how we compare with the provincial average, and we don't.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Yes. I think that's more prevalent in every school, not just first nations schools. I'll give you an example. We try to hire a young person in the office every summer. Their educational skills vary from being okay—and I'm being polite—to being excellent. But many more of them are just okay. Grammar skills straight across the board are atrocious. Somehow we have to get those basics.

But the next part of that question is, how do we match those skills with the job market or with employers and the skills they're looking for? I tell high school classes all the time to get a good basic education and that their employer will more than likely be willing to train them. You can go to them with an undergraduate degree, but they're still going to want to train you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: First of all, there is a role for government to play, but it's not exclusively government's responsibility. I think in some ways the most effective matching of skills to labour-market needs comes in almost a P3 type of format.

I'll give you the best example I can think of. I have celebrated previously the Saskatchewan government's leadership. It's the government investing in and supporting the success they saw being created by Habitat and the Regina Trades and Skills Centre in particular. The skills and trades centre is not just an educational outfit; it is an industry-driven organization that brings together education based on what the local labour market is asking for. If it's construction that they're looking for, they offer more construction courses. If it's plumbing and electrical, they do that. If it's welding, they provide those opportunities.

Every student who goes into the program has almost a guarantee of employment when they come out. What they need between the time when the opportunity is presented and identified by the employer and the time they get to that opportunity with the employer is the chance to build somewhere. That's where we come in—in the middle.

• (1630)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: That makes a world of sense. But how are they able to maintain the flexibility? You have staff there full-time. Let's say you're teaching welding and carpentry and that those trades are in demand, and suddenly there's a change, and it's oriented more to oil and gas, so it's high-pressure welding and low-pressure gas pipefitting.

How do you maintain that flexibility?

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: Saskatchewan may have the luxury of a growing economy, so everything is in demand and they can continue to invest in every area. I think this is a fair challenge to identify for the rest of the country, where there are fluctuations.

I would go back to what I think is the central proposition for me, that is, that funding should be directed to success; that it shouldn't always be government that identifies where to experiment in areas in which they think there will be success, but that we should really look at where success is being achieved by the partners at the table here.

When you identify that, you say that we should get more of it. That's where we should direct our resources. I think everybody at the table has to recognize that dollars are limited, so you want to get a good return. You should look at where success has been achieved.

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Thank you: that takes my full 15 seconds.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dubé, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thanks to the witnesses for being here.

Mr. Gouda, I want to continue on the internship question. I know that you talked a lot about what your organization does, but given that expertise in the field, I'm wondering what your thoughts are on an issue that has come up quite a few times with regard to unpaid internships—not the payment as such, but the conditions, some of the abuse that goes on.

We've heard recommendations along the lines of maybe tightening the rules a little bit concerning how these workers are treated for companies that are under federal jurisdiction. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: Thank you.

Absolutely, it is part of my recommendation. We are a very strong advocate for paid internships. We believe that the enforcement of the Employment Standards Act is the right thing to do to prevent the exploitation of youth. We've gone on record as saying that.

We believe that this is the responsibility of three players: the government needs to safeguard young people's rights and ensure fair and equal access to career-launching opportunities; the employers absolutely need to invest in our future by ensuring that young people receive the experience they need to grow and become tomorrow's leaders; and young people themselves have the responsibility to educate themselves on their rights and to make informed decisions in investing in their careers and futures.

We believe that paid internships fast-track young professionals to full-time employment. The statistics I've quoted prove that, in terms of our history.

We also believe that unpaid internships restrict opportunities—and this is key—to certain socio-economic classes. Only those who can afford to work without pay have the opportunity to get experience this way. Those who cannot afford it end up taking survival jobs and are underemployed. That is something that's really important to keep in mind as you deliberate.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I appreciate that.

Mr. Lewchuk, I have a question for you concerning underemployment. Last Wednesday we saw a report from Statistics Canada that talked about university grads working in jobs that they're overqualified for. You get 40% of university-educated Canadians working in jobs that don't require a university degree.

But more troubling than that is the next statistic, which is that 18% of degree-holders in the 25-to-34 age range work in jobs that require a high school diploma or less. We obviously know what that means, with all due respect to those jobs and that work—we've all been there. I want your thoughts on underemployment and some of the skills erosion that comes from it, but also on the wage-scarring and those related issues.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Yes, I know there are certainly concerns, and you're right on the statistics. But I think this is also a sign of how the labour market has changed. Employers are under tremendous competitive pressures. We shouldn't kid ourselves that this is an easy world. One way of solving those competitive pressures, rather than taking workers with very good skills and then giving them the training so that they become middle-aged workers with the employer, is to go on the market and try to immediately get the skills that are out there.

What that means is that we have a whole class of young workers who, to be honest with you, are not getting the training from their employers or are being forced to take unpaid internships because that's one way they can do it. Or, as our study shows, they're paying for it themselves.

I think we really need to rethink the whole model of how we provide training. In places such as McMaster, we turn out Lamborghinis of students; I think they have great skills. But they don't have any wheels yet. Someone has to take them and put the wheels on. Once you put the wheels on, those machines will go; these will be very profitable employees.

Right now we have that gap: we haven't been able to find out who will put the wheels on our Lamborghinis.

•(1635)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Or pave a nice road in front of the car, to keep to that metaphor.

That said, you also talked about one thing that I think has been really critical in this study. Beyond the statistics on youth unemployment, it's this idea of the impact on communities. It means that folks aren't buying homes. They're not starting families. They're not starting a business. We've heard about that from some witnesses.

Could you talk about some of those challenges? In your area in particular, southern Ontario, do you see these impacts on communities? Maybe you could also comment on the question of mobility and the emptying of regions as folks go out to find opportunities elsewhere—young people, obviously.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Yes, for sure. As a person my age, I speak to a lot of parents. I know that a lot of parents are upset about this process because their kids are still living in their basement. They're saying to themselves that they did everything right, that they paid for their kids' university education, and the kids are now 25 and 30 years old. They expect them to get on, but they're still living in the basement, and they want them out of their basement. They've had enough of them. I think that's certainly one of the social effects.

But you're also right in that sometimes people are being forced to abandon communities. I think Hamilton is an excellent example. It's a place where you used to be able to get a job that paid a middle income, with benefits. With the structural changes that are going on in Hamilton now, a lot of kids leave. Many parents are concerned that their children are not sticking around. I think 20 years down the road.... We have to begin thinking about what this means as we, the parents, age. Who's going to take care of us? Certainly I think about this now. Both of my kids are on the west coast for their jobs.

I think there are social issues that we need to be worried about—

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I'm sorry, but my time's just about done, so I'll be quick.

We talked about pensions at our last meeting. Some folks were saying that we should go back to the youth unemployment question, but would you agree with me? I think pensions are related, especially as someone who's part of that generation. In the sense of youth unemployment and the long-term impacts, those two-tiered pension systems play into that economic environment that creates more of a negative attitude. Is that a fair assessment?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: I didn't think about a pension when I was young, but the reality is that if you're going to have a pension, you need to start young. That's a real challenge for young people, because fewer and fewer of them are on track with pensions at an early age.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: I appreciate that. Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Dubé.

We'll go to Mr. Allen, please.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Gouda, I'd like to start with you just with respect to your program since the mid-nineties when.... I have three questions I'd like to ask you. First, you talk about 50% being hired by employers right now and most others being hired within six months. How have those metrics improved since 1996? I'd just like to understand how dynamic your organization has been. On that 50% now, was it less when you started? Have you seen that percentage grow?

Second, at our last meeting we also talked about a lot of young kids with disabilities who were shut out of the workplace or find it hard to integrate. They may be high-functioning people with Asperger's, for example. What success have you had with young people with disabilities?

Third, how many people have gone through this, have made the entrepreneurial jump instead of just going with an organization, and have leveraged that internship into potentially being an entrepreneur?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: The first question is about whether that number has always been the same or whether it has changed. It has relatively always been the same. Where it varies is from sector to sector.

For example, I cited that the Government of Ontario has hired 700 interns since 2004. Their retention of those interns is much higher than average. It's in the 75% to 90% range. The retention of internationally qualified professionals in terms of those who stay with the employer tends to be higher than for recent graduates. These folks come highly credentialed from abroad with a number of degrees and many years of experience, so the cycle they're breaking is no Canadian experience.

Those numbers have been consistent. Where they vary is in our three buckets, so to speak: recent grads, recent grads with disabilities, and internationally qualified professionals. In certain sectors, governments tend to keep people more. Partly that's for two reasons. One, our belief is that these are folks who like that career in the public sector and want to stay. Two, when you go into the private sector, once you get that break and you are no longer facing that barrier, it's much easier for the competition to hire you.

Your second question was on PWDs, people with disabilities. And the question was around...?

•(1640)

Mr. Mike Allen: What kind of success are you having with integrating young people with disabilities?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: I worked at York University before coming to this position, or at least on my road here. I saw students graduate side by side, people like Noel and me—a huge age difference here, but nevertheless—and I would graduate with a self-declared disability and Noel would graduate without one. Otherwise, we had the exact same degree, the exact same experience.

The barriers that young kids—recent grads with disabilities—face are higher, so really, it's about workplace accommodation. What we found is that once that workplace accommodation is made, it changes the cultures of organizations permanently. Again, going back to your first question on people with disabilities, assuming there is a match between the employee and the employer, the retention tends to be higher.

And your last question...?

Mr. Mike Allen: The last one is real quick because I want to get to Ms. Desmoulin. How many people have jumped to entrepreneurship? Do you know that?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: We've not measured that. What we've measured is a private sector jump, especially, again, when we work with government. The Government of Ontario has asked us to look at how many of the folks who don't stay with the government end up in the private sector, and a huge majority end up doing that.

What we do know, though, Mr. Allen, is that we're focusing more and more on placing interns with small and medium-sized enterprises. There's an appetite for entrepreneurs to hire interns. We're working more closely with those folks. Presumably, some of those people will end up being entrepreneurs themselves.

Mr. Mike Allen: How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Mike Allen: Ms. Desmoulin, I was intrigued by your tribal council, because I have a tribal council in my riding as well. One of the first nations is working very closely with the development of a mine in my riding as well. When you talked about your skills gaps and educational gaps and developing the regional training plan, I get that it's very important.

I have a couple of questions. One, how are you trying to pick up this training and are you partnering, or is there an opportunity to partner, with some of the firms that are going to be the developers of the Ring of Fire, to actually build this?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Yes. Actually, I have provided some information to everybody as well. We are working on what is called RoFATA, the Ring of Fire Aboriginal Training Alliance, which is an agreement, an MOU, that was signed by Confederation College in Thunder Bay, Noront Resources, and Matawa. Those three entities are partnering up in order to develop a training plan for our Matawa communities, and currently we are going through with that process.

We've already done tier one. It's going into three tiers. Tier one is the mining readiness programs. We've completed those. Tier two and tier three are up and coming and still in the process. Our partner is Noront, which is going to be doing the employment piece at the end of the day, after the training is completed. A lot of our clients are coming in through ASAP, the aboriginal skills advancement program that's also at KKETS. That's academic upgrading.

Mr. Mike Allen: One of the things we did in the natural resources committee a couple of years ago is that we were talking about some of this development, and the Ring of Fire came up at that time. One recognition was the different training that people would need as part of this. Some of them had different skills they had to learn hands on. Is that kind of reflecting some of the special needs for the people as well?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Absolutely.

Mr. Mike Allen: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allen.

Mr. Rankin, for your round, please.

• (1645)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Thank you.

This has been fascinating. Thanks to all of you for coming.

My first question will be to Professor Lewchuk. I just want to say that I found this "It's More than Poverty" report that you did with PEPSO, I think you said, the most disturbing document I've read in an awfully long time.

You indicate, I think, that half of GTA and Hamilton workers are in precarious jobs, by which you mean that almost half don't have stable, secure jobs, and that figure has gone up by about 50%, you say, in the last 20 years.

My question is whether there is a difference in precarious work as it affects middle-class people and low-income workers. Is there a difference that you could discern? I don't know if the jobs that these workers find are different. If so, what might the implications be?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: One of the things our research is trying to do is to separate this notion of precarious employment from that of low-wage employment; they're not quite the same. It's certainly true, though, that the majority of people in low-wage employment will also find themselves in precarious employment. They'll be in jobs that don't have benefits. They don't have control over their schedule. They're on short-term contracts and are perhaps employed through a temp agency. But our research is also showing us that there are a number of people in precarious employment with those insecure characteristics but who are not low-waged.

If you think about the change that's taking place in our economy, it's in the media, in the arts, in education—much of university teaching is now done by contract workers—and in health care. We've seen real growth in these middle-income jobs, but these are jobs that are time-limited. They may be six-month jobs or one-month jobs. They often are jobs that don't have any benefits beyond the wage. So what we have is a growing group of what we would call middle-class Canadians, but they're not in the kinds of jobs that middle-class Canadians had 20 or 30 years ago, so that once you had that job, you expected to keep that job for 20 or 30 years. Nowadays people are moving from job to job. There's uncertainty. Part of it is just the result of rapid technical change.

If you got a job with Ford in 1906 when they started making Model Ts in Windsor, you could still be working at Ford, because they're still in Windsor. But if you got a job making BlackBerrys with RIM in 1998, you wouldn't have a job now, because they don't make BlackBerrys anymore, and that's just the pace of technology.

Employers are also hiring a smaller core of permanent workers and surrounding that with a much larger ring of contract and temporary workers. Sometimes those are very well-paid jobs, but they're not permanent, and I think that's what we need to deal with as a society.

Mr. Murray Rankin: You also go on to talk in your report about precarious employment's harmful effects on individuals, families, and community life. Delaying having children is one example. I wonder if you could talk a little further about some of the implications that you've picked up in the consequences of this new trend of precarious employment.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Well, certainly young people are delaying forming households. We spoke to a number of people and they said: "Are you kidding? Having a kid is a permanent commitment, and if I don't have a permanent job, how do I finance that?" I think we're seeing this in house purchases as well. The banks don't have precarious loans. They want the same amount of money each month, but if your income flow is not the same each month, how do you pay that money?

But I think the more serious issue here is what actually goes on inside the household. For instance, if my kid would like me to coach their ball team, that means I have to commit to every Wednesday night. I don't know if I can do that, because I'm not sure which Wednesdays I have to work; I don't have control of my schedule if I'm working through a temp agency. So suddenly we lose that community support from parents to their children.

I think there's also just the stress inside the household of not knowing what income you're going to have in six months. Perhaps your child would like to go to summer camp. You can afford it this summer, but you're saying to yourself, "Maybe I had better not spend that \$2,000 this summer, because if I don't have that job next year, I may need that \$2,000 to put food on the table." So the kind of stresses and imbalances this is creating in households, I think, lead us to think about how we can support these kinds of new households.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Thank you.

Mr. Gouda of Career Edge, I found your report really quite interesting. On page 3 you talk about almost 400,000 "invisible workers". I wonder if you could tell us a bit more about what you meant by that.

Mr. Naguib Gouda: Basically this is a result of what we found in terms of part-time workers and what I referred to as the queueing effect, as economists call it. The unemployment rates exclude individuals who are not working but who are sufficiently active in their job search, so they are considered part of the labour market. That's where the 400,000 comes from.

• (1650)

Mr. Murray Rankin: I see.

In the case of the government, not as a regulator but as an employer, there have been a number of hiring freezes, of course,

federally and otherwise. What impact do those have on the kinds of young people you've studied? For example, how long will the government be able to take advantage of people and take advantage of the skills they've trained them for in a job, if in fact 90 days later it's all over?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: This is one of the objections that I hear quite often when I speak with employers, and governments—municipal, federal, and provincial—are employers. Freezes and head-count issues are a reality, and in some ways, what we are suggesting actually helps both sides in that the government—or the employer—does not have to make a long-term commitment to these folks. We are talking about a four- to twelve-month internship. That has been enough, historically speaking over the last 17 years, to launch these people's careers.

There are always things that need to be done. Whether we're talking about corporate Canada, or the private sector, or the public sector, those things need to be done. Sometimes when you can't bring in full-time workers and put aside a head count for it, bringing in an intern is the right solution. So it's actually an opportunity as opposed to an issue, as far as we see it.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Thank you, Mr. Gouda.

I think I'm out of time, Mr. Chair...?

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds, if you can ask a very quick question.

Mr. Murray Rankin: I wanted to ask Mr. Joe from the AFN a question.

With regard to the kinds of programs you've witnessed, which ones are the most effective? Some of them are run by government, NGOs, your association. What are the most successful programs in supporting first nation students?

The Chair: I love it when colleagues do this to me. I give them a short time—

Mr. Murray Rankin: I'm sorry; I didn't know how to ask it any quicker.

The Chair: —and they ask for a history of the universe in 20 seconds.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Mr. Joe, can you give a brief response to that?

Mr. Noel Joe: I think it's our ASETS program.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Thank you. That was good.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Van Kesteren, please.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): I guess that proves it can be done.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. Lewchuk, just quickly, what is the Magna model?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: I assume you're talking about the Magna corporation, the auto parts maker.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Well, I'm referring to a couple of your recent studies, *The Magna Model in Canada* and *The Magna Model in Canada and Mexico*. I'm just curious about the Magna model. Perhaps you could explain it to the committee.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: We did a study of the Magna corporation. We went in and interviewed workers and management there to try to figure out what made Magna tick. This was 10 years ago.

It's certainly a system where they encourage their workers to participate more. What was quite fascinating to us was that Magna, largely a non-union workplace, had decided to move to a system of elected representatives on the shop floor because management felt they didn't have a pipeline to figure out what was going on there.

So in some ways they replicated a union model without having a union.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Was it successful?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Magna's a very successful company; absolutely, yes.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: When you talked to the employees, were they happy with the arrangement?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: I think they see Magna as a good place to work, yes, absolutely.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: This leads me to the next question I want to ask you. We've had a number of conversations in the last few panels about our educational system. As you know, Mr. Kenney has gone to Germany...and of course, in the case of Frank Stronach, he was Austrian, but probably he's familiar with that as well.

Are we maybe missing the boat in our educational system? Are we not preparing youth for what they really should be...? I mean, obviously it's not the only thing in life, but it's a pretty big part of life. Is it time to take a good hard look at our educational system and maybe start to transform it?

• (1655)

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: I think the educational system can always be made better. It can always be made fair. I think it's quite clear that not everyone has the same leg-up in the educational system right now. It can always be made fair.

I don't think, though, to be frank, that there is a shortage of skilled young Canadians out there who want to work. I don't think that's our problem.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: But is it possibly the problem that the kids who are going to school really have no direction, really don't know what they're going to do? I have to confess that this was my situation when I attended school. I really had no idea. I didn't have much guidance in that way, either.

Is that something...? I hate to use the word "streamlining", but should we be thinking about those things?

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Maybe the issue here is what has changed from when we were young—some decades ago—in that the world was a little more stable and was a little more predictable. Now the world is changing so rapidly that I think it's beyond expectation that someone who is in their teens can figure out what they're going to be doing ten years from now when whatever they're doing ten years from now hasn't even been invented.

I think that's part of the challenge we now face in a more rapidly changing world, when making those kinds of predictions, getting that information, is more difficult. I'm not sure exactly how we solve that. I'm not sure the educational system can solve that. I think it's a collective problem that we're going to have to face, that the world just changes rapidly.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: The time has come, possibly, when we need to start talking about these things.

I want to switch over to Dawn and Noel here. In terms of first nations, we've spoken a lot about the possibilities and the opportunities in the extraction industry, and you're right; I've had the extraction people tell me they're going to need, in one particular area, 50,000 employees.

But are we missing something else? I see us running into the same danger when we tell our first nations youth that we're going to need mining workers. Are we missing the other arm, which is the unguided hand when economies start to expand and there are huge opportunities? Are we maybe just missing the vision for our young people?

What are you doing to maybe build that up and get that fire going?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: We've partnered up with Confederation College and Outland. We've done first nations natural resource youth employment programs, or FNNRYEP. We've done Mining Matters in our first nation elementary schools to give younger youths an awareness of mining processes. We've also been doing Mining Readiness, which is similar to the Mining Essentials program. That's been taking place in all of our communities.

This is just a start. This is just to get the ball going, to create that awareness.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: But are you telling them about the fact that they're going to need people to supply them with food, and the opportunities for entrepreneurship?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Good. Tell us about that.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Because we've partnered up with Noront, they've actually worked with us in developing all of the employment pieces that are going to be offered or are going to be in demand in the business when it starts booming. We've dissected that, taken a look at all those jobs, at all the prerequisites and educational requirements and all of that stuff, catalogued it, and basically have discussed it with the youth in our communities.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Good.

Noel?

Mr. Noel Joe: I think we're trying to get our youth ready to get into the trades and that kind of stuff. To get that far behind them, I think you need to start leaning more towards success of other communities and building on other success programs in the country. I think that's a key point there.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Chair?

The Chair: A very brief question.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Maybe I'll just go to you, Mr. Smith.

I think you mentioned the societal problems. We're not talking about that. How much can this be attributed to maybe the breakdowns in the homes, alcoholism, and drugs? How much of the problem is a result of that?

Mr. Jeremy Smith: Very quickly, we see that in a great deal of our families. It's left over from residential schools, but we also see a lack of parenting skills. Everything contributes to the factors that these youth are not going to be graduating from high school because they do have so many extra factors that affect their lives, and they just can't overcome those barriers to gain their education.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Van Kesteren.

We'll go to Mr. Adler, please.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

First of all, I want to begin by saying that throughout the discussions that we've been having over the last number of weeks on this issue of youth unemployment, the sort of common denominator seems to be education, if you want to sum it up in one word.

I'm going to give you all a pop quiz here. Just jump right in when you have the answer to this. I'm going to throw some names out to you: Shawn Fanning, the creator of Napster; Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft; David Karp, the founder of Tumblr; Bill Gates, Microsoft; Steve Jobs; Michael Dell; Richard Branson; Evan Williams, who created the first blog....

A voice: What's the question?

Mr. Mark Adler: What's the common denominator between all those?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: They all dropped out of high school.

Mr. Mark Adler: They're all dropouts, right?

Are we trying to fit a square peg into a round hole? What I mean by that is that there used to be a time when you would go to university/college, you'd graduate, you'd go to work for a corporation, and you'd spend your entire life there. The transition from education to the workforce was seamless. Rather than looking at the educational system and how we are educating our young people, should we be looking at that process of transition, as opposed to the process of educating our young people? That is question number one, and I'll direct this in a second.

Has education now become a lifelong process, which can't necessarily be found in an institution as such, given that some of the most successful people we hear about today are dropouts? Everybody now has an opportunity to succeed without necessarily having to go the traditional route of being educated in a traditional way. Would someone like to take a stab at that? Just give me your initial thoughts, and then I'm going to move on.

Mr. Lewchuk.

•(1700)

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: There are two things. Number one, I think the examples you give are absolutely right, but they don't represent the average experience—

Mr. Mark Adler: No, they don't. I'm not implying they do.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: What we know very clearly is that those people who are getting the better jobs also tend to have the more advanced education. That's a fact of life.

But I think your second question is by far more important. Do we need to have a continuous role for education? I think you're absolutely right: that is the new world. We do need continuous education. It may not all happen in an institution like a university or a high school, but one certainly could imagine people moving out of the workplace and into training.

How we deliver that, I think, is quite key. I would say that one thing I am concerned about with our training programs is that they all target getting people from unemployment to employment. I think part of our training program has to get people from employment to better employment.

Mr. Mark Adler: I see your point, and point taken, but this youth unemployment issue is a global phenomenon. It's not just a Canadian problem. In OECD countries, the 34 countries that make up the OECD, there are 26 million unemployed youth between the ages of 15 and 24. In the developing countries, that number skyrockets to 262 million unemployed youth.

I don't know if any of you have read this book that I read a few months ago. It's called *The Coming Jobs War*. It's by Jim Clifton. I highly recommend it to all of you.

He talks about how we need to create more high-value jobs of the future and to get away from the traditional sorts of jobs that we've been creating, because if we don't... The future of our countries depends on it. The future economic wars are going to be based on jobs, not on anything else. He gives Detroit as the best example of it. He says that our whole socio-economic foundation will deteriorate if we don't put more effort into creating the jobs of the future, not into still trying to produce buggy whips, if you will, because those aren't jobs of the future. Those are jobs of the past. That was a lot of the problem with Detroit, and now we see what situation they're in.

Could you comment on that? Mr. Gouda and Mr. Lewchuk, do you want to just jump in on it if you feel comfortable with that?

•(1705)

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: I think you're right. We should be training for the jobs of the future. The jobs of the future are going to be less in taking metal and wood and bashing them into different shapes and more in taking ideas and concepts and thinking them through.

At the same time, though, I would be a little bit cautious, say, to write off something like the auto industry, where a lot of that metal-bashing stuff is now done by robots. The jobs of the future are going to be in designing robots and the software for robots, so you can still have that kind of manufacturing and still have some very good jobs.

Mr. Mark Adler: Yes, of course. I wasn't implying that you weren't.... But has that led to—

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Mark Adler: Thank you.

Has that led to sort of another problem? We've entered—and it was a while ago, it's not a recent phenomenon—this kind of self-service economy. You used to pull up in a gas station and a guy would fill up your car with gas. That was a job for a young person. Or you'd go to a movie theatre and the ushers were all high school kids. You don't see that anymore. All those jobs are gone.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Yes.

Mr. Mark Adler: You also talked earlier about young people and how their wages are lower. Would you not say that's because youth tend to jump around to jobs more often than older people do, so the trajectory of wages for younger people tends to slope, or to be a constant at a low level more so than it is for somebody who is an older person in the workforce for a longer period of time? That puts a downward pressure on wages.

The Chair: A very brief response, please.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: There's been a lot of evidence that in the first 10 years, yes, young people shop around. That's what they should be doing.

But I think what we're also seeing now is that the shopping around period can last longer. Before, it might have been five years. Then it was 10 years, and it could now be 15 years. I think that is the problem: there's just that much longer an apprenticeship period and

Mr. Mark Adler: That tends to push wages down, though, doesn't it? So on the one hand to say that wages for young people are lower relative to wages for older people.... Because people are jumping around more often, it provides that downward pressure on wages.

The Chair: I'll have to encourage you to continue this discussion afterward.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Adler: Thanks.

Dr. Wayne Lewchuk: Fantastic.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Cullen, please.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Chair.

Very briefly, I was trying to follow along with Mr. Adler there about the aspect of the square peg and the round hole. To my mind, this isn't an either-or situation. We're talking about aboriginal youth, about unemployment and the barriers to getting young people into the jobs. Well, all jobs are the jobs of the future, because they're going to be done in the future, if you're a young person. As for the different aspects of whether it's working in a mine or working in the high-tech robotics sector, I feel that this is a false distinction that we're making here.

Mr. Gouda, you didn't get a chance to properly comment. In offering young aboriginal people opportunities, is not the greatest range possible? I'm worried that we could easily slip into this typecasting or narrowing of opportunities for young aboriginal people.

Maybe, Noel, you'll want to comment on this.

Mr. Naguib Gouda: It's young people, aboriginals included, but basically what we do and what we have learned is about matching education and skill sets to jobs and careers. Some of what Mr. Adler referred to—movie-theatre jobs and whatever—are not careers. Those are just survival jobs, or part-time jobs, or whatever. It's once you come out and you have a passion because you've studied IT or HR, or whatever, or you're a skilled tradesperson and you're matching those skills sets and that education with what you're going to do.... Otherwise, you are disappointed. As I alluded to earlier, you either go back and live in your parents' basement until you're 30, and keep studying, or you take survival jobs. And the longer it takes to launch that career, the less likely it is that the career will be successful.

Mr. Noel Joe: I'll comment. I'll give you an example of my experiences back home. In Newfoundland, in Conne River, we have a system, a social program. We take welfare dollars and we put our people to work on our reserve, and we have 100% employment on our reserve. If they're not full-time employed, they're half-time employed, and part-time as well.

It gives you an opportunity to go and seek a job under welfare dollars in a field where you are willing to go ahead and study in the future, as a trade.... For example, let's say I worked as a youth worker for four years. If I want to further my education in the youth field, in an environment of some sort, our band, our first nations, will then provide me with the necessary training to put me to work and to further my education in that field. It can be any field you want: carpenter, millwright, plumber. I think having the opportunity to do that is a great asset for our community, because it builds a self-sustaining community, and a self-sustaining country, then, for our younger people.

• (1710)

The Chair: You have at least one more who wants to comment.

Mr. Kuzminski.

Mr. Jason Kuzminski: I've heard a few questions like this. Yours dovetails with this. There is the matching of skills and education to what's out there for employment. The other part, though, is where the government has greater challenges. Where do you make the interventions for the people who don't have skills, really for the youngest of the young? Where do you make the interventions that help them to have the skills that are going to eventually match to employment needs?

This is a plug for Habitat in one thing that we do. In Peterborough we have a partnership with an alternative school, where the kids are at high risk of going onto long-term benefits and possibly going into the incarceration system, the prison system, because that's the background. They are at high risk, and that partnership, the intervention that Habitat is making with the school, provides that dual credit opportunity to give them the skills they need in an area that's needed. This is trade-skilled. They're not necessarily the creative jobs of the future, but that intervention puts them on a path that has a high degree of return. It takes people out of the negative outcomes they would have and puts them on a career path to employability.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Cullen.

I'm going to take the last round.

I wanted to start with you, Mr. Gouda, and with your organization's efforts on internships. I'm a huge fan of internship programs. I benefited from something similar myself when I was a young person. I have an intern here in the room. I've had about 20 as a member of Parliament, and it's amazing to see their energy and their intelligence. You get so proud seeing all the varying aspects of the different careers they go on to.

I just wanted to ask you about how many interns you have a year. Is it roughly 1,100?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: We just started our new fiscal year on April 1, and our plan is to help 700 people through the course of this coming year.

The Chair: Okay. And you've done 12,000 since 1996?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: That is correct.

The Chair: One of the biggest complaints I get from industry people today is that there are not enough people with skills of all types—and they often say young people with skills—so they say the government should invest more money, which I think is a valid point for them to make, but then I ask them how much they are investing in training young people. On your website, you have some companies that are partners, but are you satisfied with industry support for your organization?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: Absolutely, we couldn't do what we do without industry support. We are a self-sustaining social enterprise. We are neither government funded nor are we a charity. We could not help the people we help without the funding that comes from the private sector and from industry.

The Chair: If you had more support from the private sector, how many interns could you place a year?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: We could easily double our numbers—

The Chair: You could double your numbers?

Mr. Naguib Gouda:—and we tell our partners that every time we visit.

The Chair: Okay. You would have the capacity to double your numbers?

Mr. Naguib Gouda: We showed that back in 2010-11 when the Government of Ontario increased their number of interns from about 50 or 75 a year to 262, with the help of federal funding that year. That was easily within our capacity to do.

• (1715)

The Chair: Okay. I appreciate that very much.

I'm going to move now to you, Dawn. I have the brochures here that you have for your program.

ASAP is a different program compared to the ASETS program. Just explain the difference for us and why it is a different program.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: ASETS is the aboriginal skills and employment and training services, right? We were able to submit a proposal to MTCU. We actually received funding through MTCU. They partnered with KKETS.

We've developed a program that's assisting clients who are early school leavers, high school dropouts, and college dropouts to come back, get upgraded, work on their grade 12 English and math, those senior credits, and then move on to additional training. It's about attaining your OSSD, getting your post-secondary requirements, and then moving on to industrial training.

The Chair: So this is a different type of training, though, than ASETS would provide?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Yes. It's all under that same umbrella, actually. We all fall under KKETS.

The Chair: But this is a fairly unique program that you have developed in your area.

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Yes, from Matawa.

The Chair: Is it being modelled across the country? Is this something we should look at?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: This is a pilot. This was developed in 2012, so it's fairly new. It has actually gone through its first pilot and it's now....

The Chair: I think you had the first graduating class this year. Is that correct? Or is it the second?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: This is the second graduating class. We were able to see 18 to 20, I believe, in the first round of intakes on October 29, 2012. This year, we ended up seeing another 48. So altogether there are 63, I believe.

The Chair: Break down your funding for the pilot for me, just in general proportions. Does industry support the pilot?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: No. Actually, it's funded through the province through MCTU. Dollars were also matched with KKETS, so the training portions of that program were funded through Service Canada through our ASETS program.

The Chair: Okay. So there's no industry support currently for that, though?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Currently, no. Not at this moment.

The Chair: But if they proffered it, they could—

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Absolutely, and this is kind of what we're taking a look at. We're trying to be innovative and maybe bridging our RoFATA program with our ASAP.

The Chair: Okay.

One of the things you said that really struck me was that you said if someone was coming from your community and going to a city like Thunder Bay, the cultural differences between the community there and Thunder Bay.... For a lot of us, Thunder Bay is seen as a smaller centre, so if you go to a larger centre like Toronto, it's an even greater impact.

The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology out of Edmonton has two mobile classrooms. I think they call it mobile NAIT or something like that. To take kids out of their community at a very young age and put them into Edmonton, it's a very large culture shock, so what they do, as I understand it, is that they move these classrooms around to various communities and they do all sorts of training in that way.

Are any of you familiar with that? In your mind, does that work well?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Yes. Actually, we have a partnership that's been developed with Aecon. We have a remote training centre in one of our first nations, one of our remote communities. Neskantaga actually has a remote training centre. That was developed in partnership with KKETS and Aecon to deliver training programs. Currently we have training programs running there. Mind you, they aren't your high school courses or anything like that. It's actually training.

The Chair: So when you have on your brochure here the apprenticeship skilled trades, you can do that at the mobile...?

Ms. Beedahbin (Dawn) Desmoulin: Absolutely. There are components that we are trying to put into those communities. Aecon has the remote training centre only in Neskantaga at this moment, but what we're aiming for is to have remote training centres in each of our communities in the future, so that when the time comes, there are specific components that can be delivered in the communities.

The Chair: Okay.

This has been a fascinating discussion. The bells just started ringing, and as the chair I do have to stop the committee at this point, but I want to thank you all so much for participating today.

If you have anything further you wish the committee to consider, please submit it and we will ensure all the members get it.

Thank you, colleagues.

The meeting is adjourned.

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