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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 6, 2014**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Phil McColeman**



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

Thursday, February 6, 2014

•(0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC)):** Committee members, we're going to begin the committee meeting. We're running just a touch behind. We are waiting on witnesses.

I'll recognize you in just one moment, Ms. Sims.

I would just like to first of all say good morning and welcome, our witnesses who are here.

This is our meeting number ten of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Today is Thursday, February 6, 2014.

We're continuing our study concerning opportunities for aboriginal persons in the workforce.

Today we have a split panel of witnesses to provide testimony. For the first hour we have with us Ms. Dawn Madahbee, vice chair of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board; as well as Judy Whitlock. Judy is from the—

**Ms. Judy Whiteduck (Director of Economic Development, Assembly of First Nations):** —Whiteduck.

**The Chair:** Sorry. It's handwritten in here for me, because I believe you're substituting for another individual.

**Ms. Judy Whiteduck:** I am, yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you for correcting me on that.

Judy is from the Assembly of First Nations. I believe we will be joined, when he arrives, by the AFN chief executive officer, Mr. Peter Dinsdale.

Also joining us by video conference from the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec we have Ms. Cheryl McDonald, director of support services; and perhaps joining us—his connection is not yet made—Mr. Dave Sergerie, regional consultant for employment and training.

I'll turn the floor over to the witnesses, but I notice Ms. Sims raised her hand and would like the floor to begin.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Thank you very much.

I apologize to the witnesses, but this is a critical motion I want to get on the floor. The motion is:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities add five (5) more full two-hour meetings

to the study of Bill C-525, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act (certification and revocation – bargaining agent).

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. McLeod, I understand you'd like to respond.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Thank you—

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Can I open?

**The Chair:** Sorry, I thought you had stopped.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** No, I just read out the motion.

**The Chair:** Your pause—

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Yes sorry, it was a pregnant pause.

I really appreciate the facilitation of a discussion of this motion this morning. As you know, we have a critical study coming before us as a result of legislation that's going to be going through the House, and that is a study on Bill C-525. I'm not going to read the whole name out again. This is a bill that is going to have a significant impact on how unions or workers organize, and how they decertify.

For me, when we only allocated two and half hours for witnesses, it just wasn't enough. This is not a bill that is just housekeeping. I see this as a major overhaul of the Labour Code, and as a result I believe we need to give it the due time. As we know, when we look at private members' bills when we are in the House, there is very limited debate on these bills. That's why we have the committee stage, because at the committee stage we get to hear from witnesses, we get to examine the bill in depth, and then we do clause-by-clause and go through looking at amendments. Here, in three and a half hours, we're going to do the clause-by-clause amendments and hear from the witnesses.

I'm really appealing to all sides of the table, especially across the way from me, that there is no need to rush this through committee. I'm urging that everybody see the wisdom of us taking our time to make sure that we do justice to this piece of legislation.

I also want to say, look, the government has the majority, and at the end of the day they will get their will anyway. But to allow for this fulsome discussion will actually give different perspectives, different points of views to be heard—and some of us around the table might even change our minds as a result of that—and end up with a piece of legislation that will serve Canada well. So I really urge full support for this, and I know that in order for this to happen I need the support of my colleagues across the way. It's a new year, and you being very reasonable people, I know you're going to say, "Yes, Jinny."

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mrs. McLeod.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Thank you, Chair.

Certainly, although I appreciate the comments of my colleague, I do want to make a few comments. One is that though this particular piece of legislation creates a shift, if you actually review the testimony at first and second readings, the arguments for and against this legislation are pretty well articulated. I think that with 10 witnesses—that's a significant number of witnesses—we can have a robust viewpoint in the allotment.

There's another thing I want to note. We have a really significant and important agenda ahead of us between now and June. If we look at how full that is and at our witnesses here today, I think that in order to do all the important work we have to do we've managed to come up with a schedule to do that appropriately.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Boulерice.

[*Translation*]

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

I must say I agree with my colleague Ms. Sims. This is a private member's bill which introduces fundamental changes to the system, and will govern whether federally regulated employees will be able to unionize or not. We are going from one system to another, and it will have consequences on whether or not working men and women can give themselves a collective tool to improve their working conditions and lives. This is very important. After all, it affects 10 % of this country's workers.

We think we need more time to study this change and hear what people have to say on the concrete consequences this bill will have on peoples' lives. They could let us know what the consequences, advantages and disadvantages of this change in the system have been in Ontario or British Columbia. I think Ms. Sims could tell us about the change in her province. We also need to know about specific voting provisions in this bill, and whether they need to be amended or improved.

We feel that two-and-a-half hours is a very short period, even in a parliamentary context. We need more time to study this bill and discuss it in committee, to analyze it properly and see what its consequences will be on—

• (0855)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Mayes.

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** On a point of order, Chair, this is typically what.... We're going through the same argument that Madam Sims brought forward. We're just hearing that again. That's the whole issue we're talking about. It's that when we look at these issues, we don't have to go meeting after meeting hearing the same thing. We know what the issues are and how we're going to deal with them. We have witnesses who are waiting to speak to us, valuable witnesses who have taken the time to be here, and we're listening to a repetition of arguments on this issue. Let's just deal with it.

**The Chair:** I don't believe that's a point of order.

Mr. Boulérice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulérice:** Thank you.

This is the first time we discuss the time we will spend studying this bill. I had finished putting my arguments forward. I'm sorry, Mr. Mayes, but I think that was the first time I said that we have to take the time we need to study this bill properly.

The motion that has been submitted is entirely reasonable. That is all I have to say.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Armstrong.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Call the vote, please.

**The Chair:** Let me confer for one second.

Actually, that's not an acceptable motion. We have to continue the debate. It's not a dilatory motion, so we'll continue.

Do you have anything to say? You have the floor.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Cuzner, you had your hand up earlier. I missed it, I believe.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** In terms of my concerns around the timing, I voiced them at the last meeting. The committee and the chair are certainly aware of that.

I agree. I thought I made the case at the time for additional time, but in light of the fact that we have witnesses today, I think we're going to have to bring this to a head. I'd like to offer some kind of compromise here anyway, if I could. I will throw this out.

There are just two things. We have witnesses coming after the deadline for putting forward amendments. Even if we could put off the clause-by-clause to the following week, if we could fill that.... Right now, the group of four witnesses is coming after the deadline, so they'll have no impact on any of the amendments. If we could put the clause-by-clause off to the following week.... I'm going to offer that. The other thing is with regard to the calling of officials. I'll do this in a different motion, but if I could, I'll throw that out to the committee anyway.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sims.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I want to keep it brief, because I really don't want to take time away from the witnesses.

I do not buy the argument that once one person has said something, nobody else can repeat it. If that were the case, we would never have parliamentary democracy. We would get one speaker from each side, and then everybody could go home. But that's not how parliamentary democracy works. We all get elected as parliamentarians to represent our constituents. We're here representing the official opposition as well.

So out of all respect, I need to say that. I want to stress that I didn't bring this here lightly. I gave it a lot of consideration.

Out of respect for our witnesses, I don't plan to talk out the clock. That wouldn't be fair to our witnesses. But I can tell you that I have so much to say on this issue, and on the way this is being rushed through, that I could talk for a very, very long time and not repeat myself.

Let me again stress that to hear witnesses over two and a half hours, with one hour to do clause-by-clause, all within the same week, when amendments have to be in long before the witnesses have finished, really seems to me to be a little bit of a mockery of the parliamentary system, and especially of the role of the committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Armstrong.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** That's okay.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I think the arguments have been made. I have no more speakers on our list, so I'll call a vote on this particular issue right now.

Those in the affirmative, who would like to approve Ms. Sims' motion—

• (0900)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I'd like a recorded vote, please.

**The Chair:** Clerk, we'll have a recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Chair, in the sense of compromise, though, perhaps I could put forward another motion: that the committee reschedule clause-by-clause for February 13 of the following week to allow a second hour of witnesses.

**The Chair:** Is there anything else?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** No. That's as simple as it gets.

**The Chair:** Okay.

You've heard the motion as proposed by Mr. Cuzner. It's in relation to the previous motion, so it's in order.

I'll call the vote on this motion.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** A recorded vote, please.

**The Chair:** We will have another recorded vote.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Quickly, please, Mr. Cuzner.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Just on the business at hand, I would put the motion that the committee invite officials from the Canada Industrial Relations Board to appear as witnesses to answer questions regarding the implementation and administration of Bill C-525, that we call them as officials.

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to make a call on this, and I'm going to say that it's out of order at this point. I think it doesn't relate to today's discussion of extending the time period of our study of Bill C-525. It deals more with witness selection and witness preferences.

I'm going to say that it would require a 48-hour notice, Mr. Cuzner, to put that motion to the committee at this point in time.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Does it not mean maximizing the time, having these guys appear with the officials?

**The Chair:** I think it has to do more with who the committee chooses to have as witnesses versus time. I think the time is defined. I think it has to do more with the subject of who the witnesses are. I believe the committee would require....

I can be challenged on this, if you wish, but I'm going to make the decision that this has to do with witness selection, and does not relate to the current discussion of the motions on the floor.

Seeing no raised more hands, we'll now go to what we intended to be here for today.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here.

Let's begin with your testimony, Ms. Whiteduck.

**Ms. Judy Whiteduck:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to provide the regrets of our chief executive officer, Peter Dinsdale, who's unable to join you here today. He asked that I sit in his place. He was unexpectedly called out of town and as a result I'm here, but very happy to be here.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to provide remarks and make this short presentation. I want to thank the committee for the invitation to the Assembly of First Nations on behalf of our national network of first nations aboriginal skills and employment training strategy agreement holders, also known as ASETS holders.

My name is Judy Whiteduck and I'm the director of safe, secure, and sustainable communities at the Assembly of First Nations. The AFN, as many may know already, is an organization that works to advance and facilitate the priorities of the 633 first nations communities across the country. The Assembly of First Nations works with communities, and of course communities represent citizenry on and off reserve. I'm Algonquin from Kitigan Zibi, a community located near Maniwaki, Quebec, about an hour and a half north of here. I've been working in support of first nations communities locally, regionally, and nationally for over 20 years now. I can't believe how quickly time flies by. Primarily, my work has been in the economic development realm.

I'm also joined by my colleague, Bryan Hendry, who is sitting in the gallery here. We have prepared a short statement for your committee's consideration as part of your study.

As a first note, I'd like to give you a brief overview of the first nations employment and training program network that has been established. At a glance, our technical network delivers the ASETS federal strategy on the ground, which you were considering as part of your study. Nationally, there are 58 first nations ASETS holders serving a total population of approximately 930,000 first nations status members, citizens. There are 13 ASETS holders just in the province of Ontario, as an example. And we have subagreement holders that work with every community in each of the provinces. Collectively, they serve in Ontario—again, as an example—200,000 first nations citizens in the province.

We plan to provide a geographic map that outlines the first nations ASETS network, so that you may have that in your hands, should you wish to refer to that. We also wish to bring attention to the lesser known assistance that our ASETS holders provide and, of course, those regular, standard lines of business that ASETS holders also provide on a daily basis.

The training and skills development assistance provides ranges of training, whether it be related to trades, or to complementing training which assists individuals to become qualified for work in the job market.

We'd also like to bring attention to some of the lesser known assistance provided by the network. It includes things like child care, literacy and life skills classes, upgrading specialized training customized to individuals, first aid and safety training, elements like job search, skill building, and related supports.

In addition to this, the first nations ASETS agreement holders are also building relationships with the business community at large. This network has become a critical mechanism to supporting first nations citizens in accessing the work force, and we can't emphasize enough how important this strategy is to our community. The ASETS holders, as an example, also hold the best position to both understand and serve the unique job market needs, whether it be mining, transportation, energy, forestry, tourism, or any of the other industry sectors.

However, as much as the employment and training organizations do accomplish, we need to be reminded that there are only so many ways to stretch current levels of funding before perforations begin to form, given the growing requests that are made of our network.

● (0905)

As many of you know, we are the youngest, fastest-growing demographic in Canada. We are also the fastest-growing working-age segment of the aboriginal population.

Since 1991, first nations citizens across Canada have counted on their local ASETS holders to respond to the needs for training, education, skills development, and employment. Since that time, the cost, given inflation, to deliver programs has impacted this network and the full breadth of capacities that it could possibly deliver. Compounding this are the requests for training and employment program supports that are on the rise given that our youth are nearing and becoming of age for entry into the workforce very quickly.

Since 1996, funding for the strategy has not changed, despite the growing population and the growing training demands. Employment parity is key and a priority, and can be better achieved with enhanced

programming and investment. By doing so, it's 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 next week's federal budget, we have requested an additional \$500 million per year over the next five years. The outcome we plan for with new investments is to help put in place those building blocks that will support a dynamic future for first nations peoples, and continue to contribute to the well-being of the country.

Two years ago at the 2012 Crown-First Nations Gathering, Prime Minister Harper echoed our goals during his opening speech:

... 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

Then two months ago, in his report to the Prime Minister on aboriginal participation in future energy projects, Doug Eyford, special envoy to the Prime Minister, recommended that:

Canada should target funding for Aboriginal education, pre-employment skills development, and skills training in a manner that is responsive to the needs and timelines identified in the regional strategic plans, and sufficiently flexible to address chronic barriers to employment.

Mr. Eyford pointed out that existing organizations, such as those like the ASETS network that we work with, needed additional resources in order to be included in the development and implementation of regional plans.

As you are all aware, the current five-year ASETS program ends next year on March 31, 2015. In order to prepare for ASETS' renewal, ESDC has been engaging ASETS holders for the past several months. ESDC has also invited first nations agreement holders to provide papers and feedback on the way to strengthen and improve programming.

At our Special Chiefs Assembly in Gatineau this past December, a resolution was passed calling upon ESDC to work with both first nations leadership and ASETS holders in the coming months. Specifically a national negotiation table would be established to ensure that the 2015 successor strategy receives sufficient funding and enhanced support in order to meet growing demands for training and skills development. Our own First Nation Technical Working Group on Human Resources Development held a workshop this past December on ASETS renewal in 2015. The overall and most frequent recommendation related to concern about resources to meet the growing demand, needed supports, and programming, as well as effectively engage in partnerships in industry and all levels of government. Specifically, until such time as the first nations high school graduation rates equal Canadian levels, more resources such as pre-employment essential skills training will be needed for clients who lack high school completion. As one participant stated, a high school degree is a passport to employment.

● (0910)

I will table the ASETS technical working group workshop summary with the committee and leave this also with the clerk.

I must also point out that a number of our ASETS agreement holders from across the country will be presenting to the HUMA committee. In fact, my colleagues from the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec are presenting here today by video conference. They have specific issues to discuss, such as how employment insurance changes have affected seasonal workers. This is also a national issue for us. Our ASETS holders are also looking forward to committee hearings in western Canada. In the meantime I welcome questions from the committee and 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. In doing so, first nations peoples will become this country's greatest asset.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Let's go to Ms. McDonald via video conference.

**Ms. Cheryl McDonald (Director, Support Services, First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec):** Good morning. Thank you, chair and committee, for the opportunity to be a witness today.

My apologies to my colleagues. Ralph Cleary could not be here and Dave Sergerie is experiencing some technical difficulties from Val-d'Or. I will present this on their behalf.

This is my third experience as a witness with the HUMA committee. I was at two former ones on behalf of the AFN technical working group. Good morning, Judy, it is my pleasure to follow you.

Although my presentation touches on first nations in Quebec, I am also an active member of the AFN technical working group, so the experiences that we have in Quebec are equally experienced by our counterparts across Canada in first nations ASETS holders.

I represent the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec. We are 29 first nations communities, and we also hold the urban agreement and have 33 service centres across Quebec, which is a province that canvasses the situation of first nations across Quebec with respect to urban milieux, remote rural, and on- and off-reserve realities. Our working-age population is 45,000; 35% of those are between the ages of 15 and 29. We cover an immense territory and we manage all agreements signed by the AFNQL in the area of employment and training.

So far, I've found that the general context of this renewal of the ASETS, as we heard as we head towards the second generation of ASETS, is that it is very different from past agreements. In large part, it is because of the Canada job fund that was announced in the budget of 2013 that is currently being discussed between Ottawa and the provinces. More and more funds are being kept in Ottawa, which we've also seen in recent years with the ASEP, ASTSIF, and SPF. More power is being given to employers to determine training needs for first nations. Subsequently, these changes will lead to largely diminished Canada-province labour market agreements. That will affect first nations if this is an indication of how Ottawa is planning to modify its funding agreements with aboriginal people. It would seem at least possible, based on the past five years' experience. The bottom line is, would this approach be favourable or not to first nations?

In terms of centralized funding, we have seen three things happen so far. One positive is that it has been an incentive to acquire and use some very useful business skills. We build strong businesses, business plans, and proposals; we implemented and targeted initiatives; we are getting partners to commit. Yet, I believe, we would have acquired these skills nonetheless, without the guidance of the ASETS. We were moving towards this, maybe not as quickly. We've learned to adapt very quickly to this new agreement.

As far as the more negative aspects of centralized funding go, let me just mention two. By funnelling all extra funding through targeted and proposal-based opportunities instead of injecting the funds directly into the AHRDS and ASETS, the department has greatly affected our capacity to keep up with demographics and inflation. On this note, let me just state that our personal, individual purchasing power of our organization has decreased 55% since 1999. To compensate for this, and to pursue our development, we've had to enter into numerous other agreements, which were developed, negotiated, managed, and reported on, each with its own distinct accountability. As a matter of fact, from 2011-12 to 2012-13, we were able to increase our non-ASETS funding from \$2.7 million to \$4.7 million. To achieve this, we had to manage ten additional agreements for a total of 22 agreements with basically the same personnel. It just goes to show that there's a cost to partnering, not only benefits.

Getting back to the second part of our initial question on the new ASETS—should more power be given to employers, or to provinces or to Canada for that matter?

● (0915)

I think the real question is whether any organization or agency is better equipped or better prepared than we are to deal with the complex issues and challenges that we face daily at many levels, from the front-line workers to our chiefs and authorities. If someone asks us if we're getting people into jobs, I think of the 50% of all employment and training measures that yield a positive result: about half are employed and half have returned to school. If you ask me if those numbers could be higher, I think they could be, but that would require the sustained development of internal and external capacities, a favourable economic context, and a revamped relationship between the department and first nations. I'll get back to that in my closing arguments.

If someone were to twist the question and ask us if it's worthwhile keeping the assets when about 50% of employment and training initiatives yield a negative result, I would quickly remind them that each negative result is only one extra step towards employment and that we are not Canada's aboriginal placement agency going only for the quick wins, but rather we are the driving force behind the empowerment of countless individuals within a global first nations society.

When the scrutiny becomes a little too critical, I can't help but wonder if we were to replace all our staff with the same number of federal and provincial technicians and professionals whether the results could really be better. Isn't it possible that they'd be a whole lot worse? Taking a client, finding the right training institution or employer or professional service based on a profound understanding of what it is to be first nation: we can't see Canada or the province or employers doing this on our behalf.

We are meeting with companies and giving them an accurate account of what we have to offer, what to expect, and what we expect, and then building and maintaining a relationship while respecting land claims and political agendas. We can't see anyone else doing this on our behalf. Mediating, translating, building a community workforce, collaborating with all other sectors and aboriginal organizations, promoting education as a means of

empowering yourself without compromising your culture: we can't see anyone doing these things on our behalf.

What am I getting at with all of this? If the perfect conditions were in place, the department would at least match the inflation rate. It would streamline all funding through the assets, and it would implement a single comprehensive accountability system for all federal funding. If the department is set on not increasing the global funding of all assets while continuing to centralize all extra funding, at the very least it should keep those funds generic.

Sometimes three-way partnerships are dependent on the financial participation of the department, so when funds are not available, the department is preventing one of us from doing what it is expecting us to do. In the past few years this situation has existed for major files like adult education, vocational training, and essential skills. Also, in case the plan was ready to apply the Canadian grant approach to assets, the department should let aboriginal organizations continue to drive aboriginal employment and training.

Basically, we're saying that now that we've implemented the 19 intervention action plans, which forced us to reprogram our data system, deploy it in all 33 of our service points, retrain front-line workers, redeploy in all 33 of our service points, and offer support, all of which we have accomplished with all administrative and accountability requirements, we think that the successor strategy for the assets should remain close to its current structure, thus letting us invest more and more time and effort in the labour force and labour market development instead of implementing new bureaucratic processes. At the very least it would be helpful.

In closing, I would like to suggest a better future for our relationship. How far have we come? We've been doing this for 20 years. We've met every new set of requirements that was ever asked of us. We've developed the full spectrum of services, from essential skills to employment integration.

● (0920)

We have good working relations with other federal departments; with various provincial departments; with the other agreement holders in Quebec, who are the Cree and Inuit; with the first nations agreement holders from other provinces; and with numerous training institutions and employers. I wanted to give you one example to show that we've held our part, and now it's time for ESDC to step up to the plate and become a true partner with shared responsibility and mutual benefits. We always talk about partnership, and I really believe that first nations in Canada have to solidify this partnership before we can look at other partnerships. I think it's the foundation of the assets and the success of first nations and Canadians in general.

I would like to thank you all for allowing me to present this report. It wasn't written by me. It was written by Dave, and I had really hoped that he could have presented this himself. We are always handing over the reins to our young and upcoming technicians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and committee.

• (0925)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McDonald.

Now we'll go on to Madam Madahbee.

**Ms. Dawn Madahbee (Vice-Chair, National Aboriginal Economic Development Board):** Thank you very much.

*Aanii.* Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to present before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

My name is Dawn Madahbee, and I'm the vice-chair of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. The board is pleased to know that the members of this committee are undertaking a study to better understand the opportunities for aboriginal persons in the workplace and the supports that are available to them through federal government programs.

Established in 1990, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board was created by order in council to provide strategic policy and program advice to the federal government on aboriginal economic development. The board brings together first nations, Inuit, and Métis business and community leaders from all regions of Canada to advise the federal government on ways to increase the economic participation of aboriginal people in the Canadian economy. In recent years, the national board has reviewed aboriginal education and skills issues through its work on the Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report, on aboriginal participation in the natural resource economy, and on barriers to economic development on reserve.

I will first tell you about the Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report, which presents a picture of the aboriginal economic outcomes. I will then follow up with the board's views on aboriginal education and skills training, including its views on the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, or ASETS. I will then highlight the board's recent recommendations in these areas.

Published in June 2012, the Aboriginal Economic Benchmarking Report is the first comprehensive document of its kind to assemble indicators and establish benchmarks to measure the social and economic well-being of first nations, Inuit, and Métis. The objectives of the report are first to assess the state of the aboriginal economy in Canada across a number of key indicators including employment and education, and second, to track the progress of aboriginal people in Canada against these indicators over time. I believe you've been given copies of this report.

This report finds that although aboriginal results are on the rise, there continue to be significant gaps in education, labour, and market outcomes between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. For example, in 2011 only 62% of aboriginal people had a high school diploma; this is in comparison with 81% of non-aboriginal people. Furthermore, only 7.4% of aboriginal people had a university degree, compared with 21.4% of the non-aboriginal population.

Lower education outcomes lead to lower market and general economic outcomes. The 2011 National Household Survey indicates that all aboriginal-identity groups experience significant unemployment. The situation of first nations on reserve and of Inuit is

especially dire. The unemployment rates of 25.2% for first nations on reserve and 19.5% for Inuit are three to four times higher than the unemployment rate of non-aboriginal people, which is approximately 7.5%.

For the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, the facts just stated demonstrate that strong educational outcomes are the cornerstone upon which all successful economies are built. In the board's view, a significant contributor to these poor outcomes is funding levels that are not keeping pace with the rapid growth of the aboriginal population, which increased by almost 20% between 2006 and 2011, or with education funding levels provided to other Canadians. In fact, in absolute terms, per capita funding for aboriginal students has actually been decreasing over the last decade.

• (0930)

Aboriginal people must have the skills required by employers and communities to be meaningful participants in the economy. Our board therefore recommends that education funding levels be increased immediately to a per capita level similar to or on a par with those provided to non-aboriginal Canadians. The board calls for a review of the 2% funding cap on first nations education to align future funding increases with population growth and suggests expanding education funding to include Métis and non-status Indians where gaps with levels in mainstream Canada exist.

This is not an argument for simple parity in resourcing. It is an argument for the ability to deliver meaningful education programming and to implement specific, culturally relevant aboriginal curricula developed by and with aboriginal scholars, academics, and traditional teachers.

The Government of Canada is providing skills training support for aboriginal people through a number of programs and initiatives, including through the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, and the recently launched first nations job fund. I would like to highlight that the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board considers that ASETS is a successful program.

The delivery mechanism is locally driven by aboriginal organizations, which allows for customized and tailored interventions that can target special needs and focus on the specificity of local labour markets. The board considers the guidelines of the ASETS program to be efficient and appropriate. In fact, Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band in British Columbia—who is also the chair of our board—has decided to spend and administer his community's training funds through the local ASETS program. This is a testament to the program's value.

Furthermore, the poor educational outcomes of aboriginal people mean that the needs for pre-employment training in such areas as literacy, numeracy, and basic skills are not being met. This would be improved through sufficient education funding that ASETS must now deliver and that other programs focused on technical or occupational skills usually do not. Because of its success in supporting aboriginal training for employment, the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board strongly recommends the renewal of the ASETS program. The board would also like to offer a number of recommendations to improve ASETS to better fulfill the needs of aboriginal people.

One of the areas for improvement is in efficiency gains. ASETS could improve its efficiencies and lower its administrative costs by better aligning its coverage. In some regions, multiple ASETS holders are covering areas in close proximity to each other. In such cases, keeping local service points within one regional administrative office to encourage more collaboration on larger regional projects could potentially result in savings that could then be reinvested in additional training opportunities. This way you could still maintain those community service points but having a central administration to work with them and provide that collaboration in some of the areas, I think, would result in some improvements.

As for long-term funding, it is our opinion that the conditions under which ASETS holders operate would be improved if the funding were approved for longer periods of time. The current funding structure does not allow ASETS to support training for large, long-term projects. Long-term funding would allow ASETS training to better match the lifetime of natural resource projects and allow aboriginal people to fully benefit from the employment opportunities they generate. Long-term funding would enable aboriginal people to prepare for and find employment in major natural resource projects. Natural resource project life cycles are long, sometimes 25 to 50 years. Training must have both continuity and the ability to adapt to keep pace with new technologies as they evolve. For example, when you look at the Ring of Fire area in northern Ontario, a lot of the training is taking place before the development starts, but once that development starts there is going to be a need for continued training.

● (0935)

Early renewal is another recommendation we'd like to look at.

As the current funding for ASETS is due to end in 2015, it is important to make a decision on its renewal as soon as possible and to communicate it to all parties involved. Early renewal of the program would provide certainty for all. ASETS holders could implement their strategic plans and retain experienced and committed staff.

**The Chair:** Ms. Madahbee, can I just ask you to wrap up very quickly? Thank you.

**Ms. Dawn Madahbee:** Yes, I'm coming right to the end here.

They could implement their strategic plans and clients currently enrolled in skills training would be assured of completing their training and of obtaining their certification.

The national board believes that economic development is the foundation upon which a fair and sustainable partnership between

Canada and aboriginal people can be built. Addressing the barriers to economic development that aboriginal people face is not just good for our people; it is good for everyone in Canada. Across the country aboriginal individuals, businesses, and communities are driving regional economies, creating jobs, and generating wealth for all Canadians. As the Canadian economy faces anticipated labour and skills shortages in the coming years, we cannot pass on the opportunity to tap into the pool of young aboriginal people who are eager to work.

Efforts to increase aboriginal education outcomes and to increase aboriginal skills training to ensure aboriginal people have access to and can retain good jobs are important. A decent job that provides real opportunity and sustainability for families is the best social program.

I would like to reiterate that the national board recommends that education funding levels be increased to a per capita level similar to that provided to non-aboriginal Canadians and that the 2% funding cap on first nations education be reviewed.

Finally, we also recommend that the ASETS program be renewed with increased, long-term, sustainable funding. With this type of support, Canada's economy has a better chance of moving forward as a whole.

*Meegwetch.*

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Committee members, before we go to questions I just want to point out that we are really stretched today in terms of time, all except the first part, because we started about three minutes behind schedule. The second thing that happened here was the discussion previously. I'm going to ask if there is any willingness here, on consensus, to extend our meeting time today by approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Possibly, 15 minutes would put us in a position where we could show great respect to our witnesses, to give them the time they need to present, and also respect for our fellow colleagues at the table.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** We have guys who have to go.

**The Chair:** Okay, I'm just putting it out there.

Madam Sims, go ahead for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** I apologize, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you very much.

I want thank all the witnesses here for their testimony.

Having been a teacher for a great number of years, for most of my life, I'm really hit by many of the points you have made. I've never bought into the argument for equality; I've always been the one to argue for equity. I think all of you put forward a very good case for equity. There is a need, on the part of governments, to make major investments so we don't have the kinds of results and statistics that you have pointed out.

I come from the beautiful province of British Columbia, in the education system, and all I can tell you is that after having been out of the education system for 10 years, out of the classroom, when I went back after 10 years what really upset me was that the learning conditions were worse for the students and they should have been a lot better. I'm talking specifically about our first nations students and also talking about other students who have extraordinary needs or additional needs in order to be successful in the system.

My first question is to Dawn.

Dawn, in terms of defining long-term funding, is your recommendation simply ongoing or did you mean more than that? Are you looking at five years or ten years or what was your...?

● (0940)

**Ms. Dawn Madahbee:** I know it's always difficult to have a program that has a limited mandate, but when you look at the types of services that this programming is involved in, for things like, for example, the Ring of Fire, that have a five-year program renewal, the construction and all of the preparatory work and the training haven't even begun yet. This is a program that would be necessary for a longer term, so our recommendation basically looks at providing a longer mandate to this program.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Can you tell me from your experience, Dawn, what impact would funding delays have on delivery of programs? What might reduce or minimize those types of delays?

In other words, how can the government work to make sure that the funding flows smoothly, so we don't have this sort of jerky progress that we need when we're delivering services?

**Ms. Dawn Madahbee:** I think in every renewal it takes some time to review it and to make sure that outcomes are being met in evaluating a program. Maybe an ongoing evaluation throughout the life of a program would tell you what results are being achieved and could help, so that you're not waiting at the last minute before approval or renewing a program.

In this case—the impact as I mentioned here—people are worried that there are only a few months left before the renewal is due, and what do they do? How do the people, who are currently delivering the programs, approve a program now that takes us into 2015?

They can't make decisions. It limits that. If you look at a program where there are apprenticeships in the trades right now, you can't approve anything beyond a few months.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I appreciate that.

My next question is for all of you, so I'm hoping all of you will get a chance to give me brief answers. What kinds of challenges do you face in engaging youth and women in the workforce, and participating in the ASETS programs?

Go ahead, Cheryl.

**Ms. Cheryl McDonald:** I think one of the biggest challenges that we face, and what I convey to our partners whether it's a trading institution or services, is that youth don't trust.

Since 1990 the image that they are seeing and striving toward is not to trust Canada and not to trust anyone other than our own people. I think there's a power in what the first nations technicians like myself are seeing. That's where we have to help our youth.

We opened up adult regional centres in Quebec and they're going there to get their high school diploma. These are adult learners who have been failed by the external systems. They're coming back, they're single parents, they have social problems. The teachers who are first nations are seeing them come to class every day because for the first time they feel like they belong in that environment, that they're being exposed to language and cultural courses on top of the requirements that they need to get their secondary 5.

I tell people that the key here is that they want to hear and trust their own people before we bring them to our partners, and hand them off and work with them.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you.

Judy.

**Ms. Judy Whiteduck:** Thank you for that question. I absolutely support Ms. Madahbee's and Ms. McDonald's comments in terms of responses.

I would just add that in terms of women as a demographic and part of the workforce, the ability to participate in the workforce often points to the need for child care capacities. Women are a very important part of the first nations workforce, whether it be in the public or private sectors. Just as an example here today, we're three women presenting on this subject. I just wanted to underline and emphasize the points that my colleagues made.

● (0945)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Good gender equity when you look around the table.

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Ms. Sims.

I'm going to stop the first group of witnesses there and thank you on behalf of the committee for coming today. This is an important study and we appreciate your input.

We'll suspend while we change panels.

● (0945)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

● (0950)

**The Chair:** This is the second half of our meeting today on our study.

I would like to welcome as witnesses Chief Roberta Jamieson, the president and chief executive officer of Indspire; as well as from the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, Ms. Marlene Rice, executive director, and Chief Bruce Underwood, program employability officer; and joining us by video conference from the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development in Winnipeg is executive director Ms. Marileen Bartlett.

As I said, we are pressed for time today and I know we've suggested you have ten minutes and you can take the ten minutes if you like, but I would appreciate it if you reduce your remarks to the seven-minute range to the extent that you can.

So, why don't we start with you, Chief Jamieson?

**Chief Roberta Jamieson (President and Chief Executive Officer, Indspire):** Thank you. Good morning.

I will do my very best.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** First let me acknowledge we're in the traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation, and it's my obligation to greet them and thank them. *She:kon. Sge:no.* Good morning all of you. *Bonjour.*

My name's Roberta Jamieson, president and CEO of Indspire, formerly called the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

You're studying something that is very critical to Canada, and a field in which Indspire has been involved for several decades. I think we have important insights, and I'm pleased to offer them.

We're a national charity supporting the educational achievement of first nations, Inuit, and Métis youth in Canada. Since 1985 we have pursued our vision of enriching Canada by advancing indigenous achievement primarily through educational programs. Just to give you an example of scale, we're the largest funder of indigenous post-secondary education in the country outside of the Government of Canada, so that means about \$54 million thus far in 16,000 bursaries and scholarships, much of that funded by government and private sector, lots of corporate partners, and individual donors.

Over the last six years alone we have supported 3,000 students to pursue health careers. That's grown from 247 in 2007 to over 600 last year, a tremendous growth. There were 560 students in business, 700 in education, we have to have a few lawyers as I am one, 550 in legal studies, 620 in sciences, and I could go on. There were 400 in technical careers, and we need more there. I'm very excited that in that list there are 300 pursuing their Ph.D.s. That tells me there's both a need for assistance and also that academic excellence is clearly on the rise. So we're very pleased with the support we've provided to date.

Last spring I was delighted that the 2013 budget contained a commitment of \$10 million in new dollars for Indspire on the condition we go out and match it, and we're working hard at that. The first year goal was \$5 million, and we're over \$3 million so we're almost there. Cheer us on and write a cheque and we'll get there really fast.

We've had great success, but we have a lot of challenges as well. Year after year the gap's growing, right? The gap is absolutely

growing between the need and what's available for indigenous students. Last year we awarded \$5.2 million to 2,000 students. That was only 18% of what they needed. In short, there is a much greater need than what we can offer.

We also deliver a number of other programs designed to prepare indigenous students for success. We know financial support is essential, but there are other supports as well. We are working hard through a very new initiative called the Indspire Institute to improve K-to-12 completion rates because if we can't get out of high school, we're simply not going to get into the workforce or on to post-secondary. The Institute is simply an online community where students, educators, parents, and leaders, and our partners can meet virtually and share their knowledge and experience. We have about 1,500 members thus far, and it was just launched last spring.

We also host highly popular Soaring career conferences, motivational sessions for students in high school, industry in the classroom curriculum modules, showing our students what's possible if they stay in school in mining, journalism, oil and gas, and so on, and realizing projects working with communities directly.

I was going to start to quote to you a number of statistics as to why it's important we do what we do, but I think you know the statistics, and they have been quoted to you this morning as well. The fact is, the numbers don't paint a healthy picture for our youth, our communities, or the country.

● (0955)

I've been around a long time—as your chair will know—as a chief, as a mediator, and in many capacities. I could have quoted these statistics to you years ago. They are not changing very rapidly. This is a national embarrassment. I think we have to face up to it and take some action.

Now let me talk to you specifically about the recommendations. Timely action is critical. Unless we get at the fundamental reasons for the underachievement from kindergarten and up, there will not be much change in the participation of indigenous people in the workforce. It's that simple to me. We have to make sure there are committed funds to support change. We have to make sure we're empowering indigenous people to address the critical issues we face. We have to ensure there are real and meaningful ways to connect those goals. I have a number of recommendations.

First, supports to assist indigenous people have to be distinct from programs and services that seek to assist other groups. We simply are not the one-size-fits-all candidates, frankly. We are different. Our people are different. We're in a different place in the country. Many of our students are older. I can tell you from our own experience that mostly women are accessing our bursaries. A 27-year-old indigenous woman is our usual candidate. They're often the first in their family to pursue education, and are often single moms with great need and great determination. We need focused investment on developing supports that recognize the unique needs of indigenous learners: mentoring, internships, on-the-job training.

Second, programs that are solely focused on skills training do little when one considers that many indigenous people are not prepared to enter these programs. We need support for youth and adults in basic literacy and numeracy. In our oil and gas trades and technology bursary and scholarship program, which we created completely with private sector support of five companies based in Alberta, we found that 70% of the students we supported in a three-year period were enrolled in pre-trades training. They were not ready for the trades; that's why.

We can't simply say "There's resource development here, and there are jobs, so you all come", because our people simply are not prepared to even get into trades training or apprenticeships. So support for that is critical.

Third, to repeat what I said in 2010 to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Parliament should pass legislation stating that every first nations child on reserve should have access to an equitable education that is funded at the same level as their non-indigenous neighbours. That currently is simply not the case. It's a sensitive topic. I get it. I don't want to engage in political debate. But equitable funding on reserve must be a priority. The moneys must be found now. Having been around a long time, I would urge that we not fall prey to arguing about whether it's a provincial responsibility or a federal responsibility. I simply think we need a pool. Let's all contribute. Let's invest, and then decide later the question of who is ultimately responsible, because we'll not solve that in my lifetime.

I also know there's a big debate going on with regard to the first nations education act. I'm not entering that debate either. What I propose is something different: pass an act that calls for equitable funding—equality—and I believe you will find widespread support throughout the country.

Fourth, at Indspire we recognize that success between kindergarten and grade 12 is key to success later in a student's life. We take the success of indigenous students very seriously. That's why we created the indigenous Indspire Institute, with peer support and coaching, webinars, blogs, connecting educators, and sharing successful practices.

• (1000)

I won't go on but will simply encourage you to have a look at those things. There are, frankly, some successes. They're shining lights. We need to expose them, celebrate them, and support the growth of more.

Fifth, when developing workforce access programs for Canada's indigenous peoples, partnership between the federal government, industry, and organizations such as Indspire must be supported. We have a successful track record, with nearly 40% of our funding coming from the private sector. We've earned that credibility, we've worked hard for it, and we value it.

Industry, quite frankly, is willing to be a part of the solution. We think that encouraging indigenous participation in the workforce is a wonderful cause for all professional organizations, associations, and the corporate sector to demonstrate social responsibility and to participate in building a better Canada in a very real and practical way. That's meaningful philanthropy. But it needs federal leadership as well.

For the modules that we take into classrooms showing our people in mining sectors, we've had corporate partners such as Vale step up to fund them. We have Shell, we have Astral Media, we have the banks, and there are many more willing to work in partnership with our people.

**The Chair:** Roberta, can I ask you to wrap up, please?

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** Your timing is very good, because I'm at the end.

**The Chair:** Okay, thanks.

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** Our recommendations don't come without recognition of the work of the Government of Canada towards supporting indigenous success. You've heard about ASETS; I applaud that. You've heard about the strategic partnerships fund through which we receive support; I applaud that. And I applaud the aboriginal peoples program through Heritage Canada. These are welcome initiatives and should continue.

So also should the commitment of this committee to seek out advice on how to support indigenous success in the workforce. Please know that your work is timely. It is time to look at this issue not as a problem but as an opportunity to invest in success, an opportunity to grow real-life indigenous youth who are ready success stories, like the young men and women we have supported who are now returning to their communities to work in the trades, or as doctors, or as nurses, or as lawyers. They're remarkable examples; they tell me that with proper supports our indigenous youth are capable of anything they set their minds to.

Be bold in your work. Don't focus on the historical inequities alone that are faced by indigenous peoples; we know what they are. Instead, envision a Canada that includes the full and equal participation of first nations, Inuit, and Métis people in our workforce. Put results first. Avoid the politics. But most of all, believe that this can be done. I know it can.

*Niawen gowa* for listening to my words. I'm delighted to answer any questions you may have.

• (1005)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go on to Ms. Rice.

I'm not sure whether you're sharing your time with Mr. Underwood, but you have up to 10 minutes.

**Ms. Marlene Rice (Executive Director, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society):** Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair and the committee, for allowing us to provide a presentation to you regarding Coast Salish Employment and Training Society and any other ASETS agreement holder.

I will hand this over to Chief Bruce Underwood. We've been colleagues for the last 14 years now with the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society. I will hand it over to the chief.

*Huy ch q'u.*

**Chief Bruce Underwood (Chief, Program Employability Officer, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society):** [*Witness speaks in Hul'q'umi'num'* ]

I give thanks to each and every one of you for the opportunity to be here today to address, and to learn from one another, and to take the time to talk about what's important with respect to ASETS agreement holders.

I need to apologize. I guess I wasn't ready. We're not really too familiar with this process, and I don't have a document to read from. But nonetheless I can speak to our experiences, acknowledge the ancestors of the land that we are on today, and acknowledge each of our ancestors who allow us to be who we are as a people.

I'm an elected chief. I'm from one of 19 nations that are part of Coast Salish Employment and Training Society of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. We do work together with each other through a board of directors that oversees the ASETS agreement itself with government. We are servicing on and off reserve in our geographical area. We do have three friendship centres that are in our territories that we are serving. I know that there's a document that's been handed in with respect to a report going forward, but I just wanted to speak to some of the issues and challenges that we have.

I don't know if this is the right table or not, but I wanted to raise a level of concern. When we moved from what was called the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement, the AHRDA to ASETS, in the AHRDA itself, we were given an extension and another extension. That created a lot of chaos for the working leadership and the society itself. How do you plan to talk about the initiatives or the struggles that we're all facing with respect to lack of education, lack of understanding, and how do you plan when you're just given an extension of six months or a year?

We were told there was going to be a crosswalk of time. There wasn't a crosswalk of time. We were learning how to behave on one side of the street, we were told there was a crosswalk and here's how we're going to behave with the ASETS agreements. There was no transition for that. You know what? It's a totally different side of the street. The behaviours are different, and yet we're being held accountable with transparency. I don't think we have an issue with that. We're being financially audited. I don't think we have an issue with that. We have our program officer doing file reviews inside our offices. They're looking into our subagreements. All of the words around accountability, our nations are standing up to.

But I think when it comes down to it, it's the lack of funding for support services in our communities. When we're struggling with the

timeframes and all of these other things coming at us through the ASETS agreements, it goes to the question. I hear the word about the growth in our communities and that is what we're struggling with today. Our funding hasn't increased. Our child care is increasing; our child care funding hasn't increased. The subsidies in the province in our geographical areas that support our children are struggling. I know that maybe that's not for this table, but I think that you have to take into perspective that our nations are struggling, and we're struggling to get ourselves licensed and to meet the standards that are required for Canada and the province. I just wanted to make mention of those.

I also want to mention some of our allocation for EI because we do the consolidated revenue funds in the EI. Most recently in the last couple of years, we haven't been receiving the EI part 2 revenues to the ASETS agreement or the AHRDA holders. It's our understanding that the EI part 2 revenues are going to the employment and assistance services in our local municipal governments. Yet we're asked to meet the targets on reserve or off reserve for our clientele inside the ASETS agreement. It's my understanding that the targets within the EAS offices are not being met. They are supposed to be meeting a number of first nations clients a year. That's not being met. We don't see those audited financial statements. We don't see the data entry on those reports.

There's a bit of friction going on. You see the first nations saying, "Those are our dollars. Why aren't you accountable to our first nations? Why are you pushing our clients back towards us?" There needs to be a mechanism for us to actually sit down and talk about a plan that services first nations with those dollars.

● (1010)

We're not at that table, and I don't know where that table is. It's very difficult when we're trying to service first nations off reserve and that isn't an opportunity for us.

The other part of it, too, is that when we talk about essential skills for employment and about feeling self-pride and self-identity, we're told by our program officer that we're not allowed to have our culture or our language incorporated into some of the training or to have a stand-alone program. But when we spend a lot of time and energy looking at what essential skills and employment opportunities are, what do those look like? I think numeracy, literacy, and all of those things are very important. But when you look at where we come from as a people, it's also important to know the language and to have the elders incorporated.

It doesn't mean just culturally. We need to bridge the cultural gap to mainstream society. A lot of our people might figure there's discrimination on the work site when somebody's up there yelling, "Throw these down and get me that cord." Some people do feel...but that's the language, and that's the culture on the construction site. We don't have enough of those mechanisms in place to have that cross-cultural bridge to some of our success stories, and I think that's why we might fall through some of the cracks.

On population growth, when we talk about the demographics of how our community is growing and the growth, I feel like we're competing with the provincial growth as well because of the immigrants. A lot of people are coming in. We're struggling that way. How do we fight with mainstream society to get meaningful career jobs, not band-aid jobs?

I'm trying to speak really quickly here. I'm very conscious of the time. I just want to mention that we want meaningful employment. We want what's right. In our communities, we're trying to define what success is when you have suicides, drinking and drugs, health issues, a lack of housing, and poverty. When we define success through our guiding principles, as nations we're somewhat forced to try to understand provincial success and federal success and what true partnership means through the ASETS agreement. It doesn't necessarily jibe sometimes. We need to have some flexibility in how we're going to work together and what that's going to look like. Again, maybe it's just a matter of creating that table that allows us to do what we need to do, on behalf of all us. I think once one of us feels good, we're all going to feel good.

I think the other part of it is that when you start moving dollars from one table to another, it's.... I talk about the active measures in our communities. Those were moved from our agreement holders over to education. First nations seemed to be at each other with respect to where those dollars were going. We want those dollars back. It makes it difficult for our own leadership to sit down and have meaningful dialogue around that.

And yet, as I say, I love the idea of tracking our children from elementary school to middle school to high school. Our children aren't being assessed, I don't think, properly in grade 1 to grade 6 to grade 9. I'd like to take a look at those assessments. I know it's provincial standards that do the testing.

One of the things we're worried about is that the SA—social assistance—recipients lineup is getting longer. How do we help that? The other part of it is that if they're not on SA, you know what, they're in our federal and our provincial court systems, and those lineups are getting longer. Those are the things that we're seeing in our communities. We're trying to work with all of you to make sure those needs are being met. Some of the communities are feeling good about what we're supposed to be doing.

•(1015)

**The Chair:** You have about one minute left, Chief.

**Chief Bruce Underwood:** Thank you.

I'd like to suggest—not an amendment to the ASETS agreement, if there's one going forward in 2015—I think we need to have a longer agreement sitting in front of us so we can actually plan and work with those targets in that plan, rather than shifting it every 12 months.

I guess those are my closing comments. I just want to be able to work with the other ASETS holders in the province and in Canada and to work with the people who actually have some influence to make things happen for all of us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

My apologies for not addressing you as chief in the introduction. That was not in my notes, and I apologize for that, Chief.

We go now to Ms. Bartlett, in Winnipeg, I believe.

**Ms. Marileen Bartlett (Executive Director, Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development Inc.):** Good morning.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members, for inviting the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, or CAHRD, to present.

I hope everyone has had the opportunity to view the short video we sent. It is somewhat dated. We've developed more programming since then. But it provides the essence of the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, ASETS, program in Winnipeg.

I'm going to make a few points, and then hopefully I can answer any questions you might have.

As I said in my brief, I believe the ASETS and previous aboriginal labour market programs have been very successful and essential. As well as allowing us to provide employment and training to aboriginal people, ASETS has also allowed us to leverage many other services to support them.

CAHRD has also used two other federal employment programs in the recent past. One was the aboriginal skills and employment partnership, ASEP; and the other was the aboriginal skills and training strategic investment fund, ASTSIF. Both were positive, and helped us to train and find employment for aboriginal people. We also have dealings with Western Diversification as they continue to be supportive by helping in the acquisition of machinery and developing training space for us.

The ASEP program allowed us to develop more capacity to deliver programs that facilitated the establishment of a modern, state-of-the-art, flexible training centre. Neeginan College, our training institute, was able to expand its industry partnerships, and also credibility with industry was enhanced. When our ASEP project, aboriginal aerospace initiative, was over, CAHRD continued with the infrastructure and training with some of the partners through our ASETS funding. Our programs, which were industry and apprenticeship accredited, finally allowed us to train aboriginal people for employment in the gas turbine overhaul and machinists at apprenticeship level 1 in aircraft maintenance. For that program we had a total of 101 aboriginal people employed.

The ASTSIF program was shorter and it had timing issues, but it also helped us to establish ourselves more in terms of working with industry. We developed two programs there, one for medical device reprocessing technicians, and the other for industrial manufacturing technicians.

To end then, there's another question that I'd like to answer, and that's the one about employment opportunities for aboriginal people. I do agree with the previous speakers, all of our issues are so very important, and the work that we're doing is so important. Aboriginal people do have opportunities in employment but we have to prepare them for the workforce, and we need to prepare the workforce for them. From our experience, we know that industry wants to work with us to train and hire aboriginal people. We couldn't do the type of programming needed to accomplish this without the ASETS program. Although we try to use a holistic model at Neeginan and CAHRD, we still don't meet all the needs of our clients. We would be more successful over time if we did a better job at providing full wraparound supports. The participants who access our services are susceptible to falling back into their former lifestyles. The better we are at engaging them in new lifestyles, education, and training, the more successful they will be. This is why future ASETS programs have to continue to be a balance between direct training skills for the labour force, and providing resources, so that we can provide the education, training, personal and cultural awareness, development, and stabilization that our clients need if they're going to be able to enter training and the workforce.

We did a cost analysis for a family consisting of one parent and two children going from employment and income assistance to a salary of \$25,000. This shows that the benefit to the government funders would be approximately \$25,000 for that small family, and this also includes the \$5,000 that it costs on average for one employment placement by CAHRD, our agency. If we multiply that by the number of clients we place in employment in one year, this is a saving of over \$22 million. This is a social return on investment of 460%, and it doesn't speak to the intergenerational benefits of not raising children on welfare and of breaking that cycle of poverty.

• (1020)

Now I want to talk a little about developing partnerships. Employers are susceptible to stereotyping on past experiences with aboriginal workers and they also have production needs that have to be met. Thus they're sensitive to workplace issues that may present themselves with our trainees.

We make a great effort to support employers and our trainees in work practicums and on the job. When we develop a partnership we're very candid with our employers and we let them know we need their support to maximize benefits for trainees and for the workplace. We have job coaches and other supports for the trainees and employers. These are essential.

We have worked with Standard Aero for over 15 years. Both Standard Aero and CAHRD are proud that it was this partnership that resulted in Standard Aero having a 10% aboriginal workforce. This formal partnership, based on a letter of understanding and joint steering committee, is designed to fulfill Standard Aero's attrition rate of approximately 10 to 15 gas turbine technicians each year. I'd like to say that one of our first training programs with Standard Aero 15 years ago was training all women to work in the industry. Some have moved on but I do know there is one lady still there and she's in a supervisor position.

Employment and Social Development Canada's focus is on training to guarantee jobs and having employers share in the costs.

CAHRD has always had a model of training for employment with employer partners, but in most cases employers didn't contribute financially. They have provided, and do provide, in-kind assistance in terms of their time on committee, work practicums, and even giving machinery and providing some training. For example, this is very tentative but right now we're talking to an employer outside of Winnipeg who is willing to shuttle aboriginal workers to and from work once we have them trained. This employer is also willing to bring the product and his workers to supervise our trainees so that the required work practicum can be done at Neeginan College. At Neeginan College we train if we have employer groups interested in hiring. But because of how quickly the labour force changes, not all trainees are always employed immediately after the program ends. But they do gain the skills to enter the workforce as soon as there are opportunities.

Finally, I want to comment on our relationship with the Province of Manitoba. In my brief I mention that we didn't have a collaborative relationship with the labour market program, which is true and it would have been helpful, but I do want to make note that we do receive quite a large amount of support from the province for several of our programs, including an adult learning centre, housing for our students, two day cares. So far this year we've received about \$250,000 from the province for tuition for our students who have been attending our Neeginan College of Applied Technology.

In closing, I want to thank you for listening to us and also give my support to the previous proposals because we all have the same story. There is a great need to continue these programs and enhance them.

Thank you.

• (1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Bartlett.

On to questioning, Madam Sims from the NDP.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you very much.

I want to thank the panellists for coming to inform us and to expand on the needs I think most of us around this table, if not all of us, realize do exist for our first nations communities, specifically for our youth, and the need for us to address that. It's a topic that's close and dear to my heart. I'm hoping that with everybody working together we can actually progress and see some real changes that will benefit everyone.

My first question is on EI claims.

Roberta, maybe you could comment on this and the other two as well, if you would like. Are you able to elaborate on EI claims as they relate to seasonal employment and how does ASETS work with EI claimants?

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** I think that's a question for other people on the panel.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you.

Marileen?

**Ms. Marileen Bartlett:** I'm not sure I understood what the question was. I'm sorry.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I will try to go over it again.

How does ASETS work with EI claimants? As you know, the EI claims as they relate to seasonal employment are...and I just want to see how those participating in the program are impacted by it.

**Ms. Marileen Bartlett:** I could make a comment on that, Mr. Chair.

In Winnipeg, in the program that we work with, we actually don't have very many aboriginal people coming to us who are on EI. Many of them are on EI type 2, or because they don't qualify for EI they are actually on social assistance.

So we don't have a lot of interaction with that process.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you very much.

Chief, did you want to add something?

**Chief Bruce Underwood:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We do have EI participants who come in and access those services, but it's not a large number. For example, we're able to do a three-year reach-back, or a reach-back for maternity. We have what's called a "section 25" form. If somebody who is currently on EI goes into a training program, we can sign and have them register into that program to allow them to extend their EI while they're doing a training program towards employment.

That is something our offices do.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you very much.

My next question is maybe targeted more to the Salish. Can you talk a little bit more about developing tailored training to meet the demands of workers in individual communities? On the island you're dealing with some quite diverse needs in communities. By the way, my family still lives in Nanaimo, as do my children and grandchildren. I did most of my teaching on the island itself.

Can you also give feedback on this type of approach of developing targeted training for the needs of different communities?

**Chief Bruce Underwood:** One of the specific partnerships we're working on is with the Coastal Aboriginal Shipbuilding Alliance. If you look at where we're at, I think there is an opportunity for us to take a look, in partnership with the Department of National Defence and in partnership with Victoria Shipyards, at opportunities for us to be part of those, with the cost sharing.

So if you were looking for a specific snapshot, that would be my quick response with regard to an opportunity in our area that we're taking a look at now.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Thank you very much.

Next, do you feel that child care needs are adequately addressed right now? I'm just going to throw that out there: a yes or no is fine.

**Chief Bruce Underwood:** No.

**Ms. Marlene Rice:** No.

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** Absolutely not, and it's a great need.

Often the students who come to us will only require child care during the day, but a lot of the programs they're attending are offered in the evening. They may just need that extra \$1,000 to cover off child care so that they can pursue their studies.

I absolutely do not think that child care is adequately provided for our students.

• (1030)

**The Chair:** We'll now move to Mr. Armstrong, for five minutes.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here. We have only a limited amount of time, so I'll try to focus my questions.

To start with, Ms. Jamieson, I read your biography, and you are the first female first nations person in Canada to receive a law degree. I want to congratulate you on that. That's a great sign of success. I'm sure when you went off to law school and looked around, you didn't see many people like you sitting around you, obviously, but you still managed to succeed and get through, and have gone on to such great success.

In Nova Scotia, and Mr. Cuzner would support me on this, we're actually having some success working with first nations youth and getting them to graduate from high school. We have a really high percentage compared with other places in the country.

This is anecdotal, but I'm just wondering...because you have a lot of experience with first nations students at the post-secondary level. Of the students we are sending to the post-secondary level, we're having trouble keeping a lot of them there. I believe there are some barriers once they get to the university level that preclude them from completing their education at that level.

As I say, it's anecdotal, because I've been working with students as an educator for a long time, particularly first nations students. But am I accurate in saying this? Does the data support it?

**Chief Roberta Jamieson:** Yes, in fact, it does.

We don't talk a lot in the country about retention. There's a lot of discussion about entrance and attracting more to come into colleges and universities. Colleges and universities themselves understand that their future is inextricably tied to their ability to attract and retain not only foreign students, but also the fastest-growing demographic, indigenous students. They are also very keen to do that.

We've done some work in partnership with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. We hosted a summit with them, talking about the very issue you raise. There is a public report. The summit was hosted in 2010. We talked about the changes that colleges and universities need to make to ensure that our students stay there once they get there. There was everything from creating centres where our students can go and meet one another... That's what kept me in university and college, I'll tell you. First of all, I could go home. I was lucky, when I went to law school I didn't go too far away. But when I did my undergrad I went to McGill, so it was long way away. I wanted to know that there were other students there like me. There were student centres, there was access to elders, counselling.

We just finished an updated study, again in partnership with AUCC, on education choices, as we call it—why students choose to go where they go. Some colleges have a high enrolment of indigenous students, and others do not. There are reasons for that.

Those are two reports that are publicly accessible. Perhaps your researchers might dig them up.

I know about the success of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. It's one of the shining lights in the country.

**The Chair:** I must inform my colleagues and the witnesses that the meeting will have to adjourn due to votes. The bells are ringing.

Before we adjourn, I apologize to the witnesses for the fact that this is the way Parliament works. I'm sure most of you know that. We did have a condensed amount of time to deal with this issue.

Let me say to colleagues and members around the table that if there are further questions that you have of the witnesses today, please feel free to bring them to the clerk's attention. We will make

sure that if it's a particular witness you want to ask, or if it's the broad range of witnesses on a particular question, we'll be sure that they receive that, and we would ask them for their response back as we do this study.

We really thank you. I do have to be somewhat aware today that the presence of Roberta is very special to me. I must tell the table that, because she is a former chief of Six Nations of the Grand River, which I represent in the great riding of Brant.

Thank you, Roberta, for being here.

Thank you, other panellists.

The meeting is adjourned.

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