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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**

**Tuesday, February 4, 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

Tuesday, February 4, 2014

• (0850)

[English]

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Caroline Bosc):** I see a quorum.

Honourable members of the committee, I must inform you that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, cannot entertain points of order, nor participate in debate.

[Translation]

We can now proceed to the election of the chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

[English]

I'm ready to receive motions for the chair.

Ms. Sims.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** I'd like to nominate Phil McColeman to be chair.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Jinny Sims that Phil McColeman be elected as chair of the committee.

[Translation]

Are there any further nominations?

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Phil McColeman duly elected chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Clerk:** Before inviting Mr. McColeman to take the chair, if the committee wishes, we will now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** I am now ready to receive motions for the position of first vice-chair.

Mr. Armstrong, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** I'd like to nominate Jinny Sims as the vice-chair.

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Armstrong that Ms. Sims be elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further nominations?

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Jinny Sims duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I am now ready to receive motions for the position of second vice-chair.

Mr. Armstrong, you have the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** I nominate Roger Cuzner.

**The Clerk:** It has been moved by Mr. Armstrong that Mr. Cuzner be elected as the second vice-chair of the committee. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** I declare the motion carried and Mr. Cuzner duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

I now invite Mr. McColeman to take the chair.

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC)):** I'll begin by saying happy new year to everyone. Thank you for your confidence in bringing me back into this newly constituted committee.

I'll recognize you in a second, Mr. Armstrong.

I noted in the review, coming into this session, that we've got a busy schedule and we've got a lot to accomplish. It's an exciting time actually for this committee. I think we can accomplish quite a bit in the next while, up to June. I'm looking forward to everyone working together and your cooperation in making sure we're as productive as we can be.

Now I'll recognize Mr. Armstrong.

**Mr. Scott Armstrong:** I move that we go in camera to discuss committee business.

**The Chair:** The first item on the agenda is committee business. We'll proceed to a vote on moving in camera, unless there's unanimous consent.

(Motion agreed to)

[Proceedings continue in camera]

• (0850) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (0950)

[Public proceedings resume]

**The Chair:** We're back in open session for the second hour of meeting nine of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

We're continuing our study concerning employment opportunities for aboriginal peoples, and we have a number of witnesses who have joined us via teleconference to provide their testimony.

First, from Syncrude Canada Limited, we are joined by Ms. Kara Flynn, vice-president of government and public affairs.

We are also joined by Mr. Ian Anderson, president of Kinder Morgan Canada, and although we are not able to see on our video screen, I believe he is with Martha Matthew, the consultant for training and employment, Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project.

From Cameco Corporation, we are joined by Mr. Russel Mercredi, human resources specialist and northern recruitment coordinator.

I'll now turn the floor over to our witnesses for their opening presentations. I would ask that you keep your remarks to five minutes due to our limited time with you.

Let's start with Ms. Flynn from Syncrude.

**Ms. Kara Flynn (Vice-President, Government and Public Affairs, Syncrude Canada Ltd):** Good morning, and thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to present to you today.

I am Kara Flynn, the head of government and public affairs for Syncrude. Within that portfolio I am responsible for our aboriginal

strategy, and all of our consultation and oversight for activities in the employment and business development areas.

I'll take you through the first slide in our presentation.

Syncrude actually established six key commitment areas with the five first nations that we engage with directly in formal consultation with the five chiefs. You can see those commitment areas in front of you. I'll focus mostly on the education, employment, and business development areas in my remarks this morning. We have been doing this for a long time. We are 50 years in business this year. Aboriginal relations was the second department formed at Syncrude, right behind our research and development department.

Moving quickly to the next slide on achieving success, focusing on the education and training area, we take a long-term view to developing—

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Excuse me, Chair.

**The Chair:** Excuse me for interrupting for one second. I have a question from Ms. Sims of the NDP.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** My apologies to Ms. Flynn, but I think she is referring to a document we don't have in front of us. If we could wait for that document, it would help.

**The Chair:** I apologize, Ms. Flynn.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** My apologies, Ms. Flynn, it's not your fault.

**The Chair:** To give you some background, this morning we have gone through reconstituting this committee because of changes to the committee that happened between the last session and this session. We've just finished that committee business, which took an hour, and we were not able to distribute the documents prior to the newly constituted committee as you see it today.

I apologize for having you go forward. I should have been more aware of having those documents in front of our committee members. If you could bear with us just for another 30 seconds or so, everyone will have the deck that you're referring to in front of them.

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** All right. That's no problem at all.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Flynn. Please proceed.

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Thank you.

To give you a quick recap, Syncrude has six key commitment areas where we engage and consult directly with the chiefs in the local region. They are shown on that first slide. They were developed in consultation with those chiefs. They will focus on the education and business aspects of those commitment areas.

Flipping to the next slide on achieving success, under education and training, our goal is to expand the available pool of aboriginal employees in our region. Because of that, we take a long-term view of our program in this area. We're working right from very early education, grades 1, 2, and 3, on enhancing literacy and numeracy skills. We're providing hot lunch programs in a first nation just north of our operations. We provide support for the University of Alberta to actually bring in student teachers to enhance the teaching capacity in the rural areas.

As well, moving into the deeper aspects of education, we support science and technology programs in high schools. We recently made a donation of \$1 million to help build a new science and technology centre at a high school in Fort McMurray which has 20% aboriginal participation.

We support trades development for teens. One of our landmark programs is something known as the aboriginal trades prep program with our community college. It takes in young adults who have left the school system and gets them their GED and all of their pre-apprentice program. After eight months, they can pick a trade and Syncrude will give them a full-time permanent job upon their successful completion of the program.

Moving to the employment side of that, again, we make sure we have a multipronged approach to attraction, but also that we're creating a workforce that is conducive to retention of aboriginal employees once we have secured them. Obviously, that trades prep program with the college is a key part of our recruitment. Similarly, we have a fly-in rotational program with Fort Chipewyan, which is 250 kilometres north of our operations and is home to two of the first nations whose traditional lands we work with. Since 1980 we've been flying workers back and forth on a six-in and six-out rotation. We provide their accommodations and all of the costs of transportation back and forth. That program has grown over the years and now has about 30 full-time permanent employees working in it.

On the retention side, we have mandatory cultural diversity training for leaders, as well as aboriginal cultural training for all leaders who have staff of aboriginal heritage in their departments. Clearly, one of our challenges, which I think is true for the entire industry, is that we are extraordinarily successful at attracting employees in the more occupational and trades aspects of our business, and we all continue to seek opportunities to move aboriginal people across all aspects of our business into the more professional, technical, and engineering and sciences aspects of our operations.

Moving finally to the business development aspects, this also is another form of employment in our region. What we tend to see as a true definition of success is employees coming to work for Syncrude and then ultimately leaving and starting their own business and employing even more aboriginal people from our region.

Since 1992 we've been tracking our overall spend. We're proud to report that at the end of 2013 we crossed \$2 billion in cumulative spend with local aboriginal peoples in our community. Syncrude has been a leader in this area. Others in the oil sands industry, I'm pleased to say, have followed our lead and now the overall spend is about \$1 billion a year in the local community with aboriginal peoples.

We helped establish an aboriginal business group called NAABA, the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, and we're active participants in the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, as is Cameco.

To turn now to the benefits for Syncrude, there's a very strong business case for us. This is a local supply of labour and supply contracts and business contracts. They are far more cost effective

than bringing in labourers or workers and suppliers from other areas of Canada and beyond.

• (0955)

What's particularly notable for us is that our aboriginal attrition of our full-time employees is lower than our overall corporate attrition. They live in the region. They're from there. They have no desire to move away from our community, which we find extraordinarily valuable.

We see the same business case for Canada. This is a massive pool of potential employment for our country, and a massive supply of business contracts from one end of the nation to the other.

Going forward, we would recommend Canada consider continuing to invest in aboriginal support and education. With respect to ASETS, the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, and the skills and partnership fund, Syncrude would certainly like to encourage the Government of Canada to renew those funding programs when they expire next year.

Perhaps I'll leave my comments there and move it to my colleagues.

• (1000)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Flynn. That was excellent timing.

We'll move on to Mr. Anderson, who is the president of Kinder Morgan Canada, for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Ian Anderson (President, Calgary, Kinder Morgan Canada):** Thanks very much. I'll work hard to stay under five minutes. Thanks for the opportunity to appear before the committee.

I'd first like to say we agree with the good parts of your last report that was issued last year, particularly as referenced by Jennifer Steeves where she talks about the importance of skills training upgrading and more access to student training and job seekers for Canadian growth. I would add, though, and I think we would all agree, that an important part of that solution must be the development of skilled workers from the aboriginal labour pool.

You may know we are proposing a \$5.4 billion expansion of our Trans Mountain pipeline from Edmonton to Burnaby. As part of the project, we're actively engaged with aboriginal communities that are impacted by the project. We know that a key for our success and the success of the industry is accessing the skills and abilities of the people living in the communities we are affecting.

We also know the aboriginal population is primarily under the age of 24. We need these people to be active contributors to our project and to the economy.

The growth rate of the aboriginal population can have a positive impact on the overall workforce, and we need to work together with government for an active program of development in the areas of education and training.

I might note that the recent Doug Eyford report to the Prime Minister listed a number of oil and natural gas projects which, if approved, will exacerbate the shortage of skilled labour available to execute on these projects.

While talking to aboriginal communities, we have often heard that training and long-term employment are of primary importance to them. We have also heard about some of the barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment that aboriginal peoples experience. There's the lack of high school completion, lack of scholarships and difficulty in accessing them, lack of transportation, lack of adequate funding for training and education outside of their community, and lack of child care in many cases. Perhaps the biggest barrier of all is often the proximity of training to the communities, making transportation and living support in those communities for those individuals of utmost importance.

We all know that small businesses are among the main job creators of the economy. As business picks up and the economy grows and these projects proceed, small business will be at the core of that. To encourage job creation in aboriginal communities, we have a well-developed procurement process with dedicated staff who work with these first nations communities to identify what businesses they have, what opportunities they are seeking to pursue, and how they can use our work to leverage into other opportunities for other companies.

Another important aspect of our work is that we have dedicated procurement staff who have assisted first nations businesses in achieving what we call ISNetworld certification. ISNetworld is a safety certification model that enables businesses to pre-qualify for work. This capability is a critical asset for them to have. We've worked directly with them to obtain that certification, and we've worked with over 12 aboriginal communities so far in British Columbia and Alberta to achieve that certification.

We've also been working with aboriginal contractors directly for their procurement bidding expertise to assist them in understanding how and through what vehicles they should be looking for procurement opportunities. The practice has proven to be very successful as a way for these contractors to, if you like, get their foot in the door. Once they have a proven track record, then they can bid for more work with my company and others.

We are committed to using an aboriginal workforce locally to the maximum extent possible. We have many past examples of that from past projects for which we have taken individuals and enabled them to succeed and prosper through contracts.

We have dedicated staff to training and employment initiatives, and we work to maximize aboriginal participation in the long term and short term. An apprenticeship program is being developed to ensure we can assist in training these people to fill vacancies that come about.

In terms of partnership activities, we're active with Utility Boot Camp, more currently renamed Skill Builders, in British Columbia, which promotes the training of aboriginal people.

• (1005)

Youth summer opportunities have been pursued at our terminals in Burnaby and Edmonton to provide jobs.

We appreciate the contribution of the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, ASETS, and what they do for industry. They're directly connected to first nations and aboriginal communities that we're engaging with. We rely on them to assist in our training and development programs. They can access these people with programs that directly match up with industry's needs. They're an important resource in our efforts to increase capacity and recruitment.

I'm happy to take questions afterwards on any more details.

In summary, the work of the Government of Canada, the provincial governments, first nations governments, and industry needs to continue. The additional comment I'd make is that we recognize that in the inclusiveness, the partnership dedication and commitment by the leaders in our industry is required. This is not just about government and first nations putting together training programs and training models. Industry has to be core to that effort to identify what the opportunities are specifically, what kinds of trades are going to be needed, and how we marry programs with those needs to maximize their overall value.

As I was saying to Martha earlier this morning, one of the important visions that I have, if you like, is to give back to these communities not just our jobs, but their jobs.

I think that there is a very important intersection between what industry is doing, how they are active on the land that has been held by these people for generations. I think there is an incredible opportunity to connect industry activity with the preservation and sustainability of the land, the water, the vegetation, and the habitats on these lands.

We're actively pursuing, if you like, models where first response capability to emergency right-of-way preservation and protection, natural hazard identification and remediation are all part of the fabric of what's important to my business. We also know it's implicitly important to the aboriginal communities. I think there's a very valuable intersection and that we need to look for all the opportunities that we can.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

We move on to Mr. Mercredi, for five minutes.

**Mr. Russel Mercredi (Senior Specialist, Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition, Cameco Corporation):** My thanks to your committee for inviting Cameco to share our knowledge and experience with regard to aboriginal education and employment.

Our company is headquartered in Saskatoon. Cameco is one of the world's largest producers of uranium for nuclear energy, accounting for 14% of global production. The majority of that production comes from our extensive mining and milling operations in northern Saskatchewan, which will be the focus of my presentation.

In producing our uranium products, Cameco employs more than 4,675 people in Canada between direct employment and long-term contractors. More than 1,500 of these jobs are held by workers of first nations or Métis heritage, making Cameco Canada's largest industrial employer of aboriginal people in Canada. We intend to continue to build on that achievement in the future. Our success in aboriginal employment has been accomplished through well-designed recruitment programs, training partnerships with governments and aboriginal agencies, accommodation by unions, and clear management policies.

As I mentioned, our mining and milling operations are in northern Saskatchewan. It's in a region called the northern administration district, which covers approximately half of Saskatchewan's land area, but has less than 4% of the population. Eight out of ten people in the region are of aboriginal descent. About half the population in the region does not have a grade 12 education, and just 25% of the region has post-secondary education. This is a serious challenge because our operations require a highly technical and skilled workforce. Ensuring aboriginal residents have the required secondary and post-secondary education to work in technical positions is an ongoing challenge for communities, government, and the company.

For Cameco, providing benefits such as well-paid employment to those most impacted by our operations is the right thing to do. More importantly, it makes business sense to recruit and develop a workforce from the young and predominantly aboriginal population who live in the region and not 700 kilometres away by air.

Cameco's corporate responsibility has five key pillars.

The workforce development pillar in particular has been key to our success in aboriginal employment. At two of our operations, we have full-time workplace educators who work in partnership with the regional college, Northlands College. The workplace educators provide GED and grade 12 upgrading and skills training to Cameco employees and contractors.

Externally, we work in partnership to help raise the skills level of people in the communities and get them prepared for employment. This has been addressed through a number of partnerships which have been effective. One example is the Northern Labour Market Committee and its subcommittee, the Mineral Sector Steering Committee, which manages the multi-party training plan. Currently in its fourth iteration, this training-to-employment initiative is realized through collaboration with industry, government, aboriginal agencies, and training institutions. Over its 21-year existence, the multi-party training plan has trained more than 3,000 northern residents for entry-level positions as well as technical trades and professional occupations in the mining industry.

Another successful partnership that Cameco supports is Northern Career Quest. This is a joint federal-provincial program. With industry support, it targets residents of northern Saskatchewan of aboriginal descent for training that leads directly to employment.

Since its inception in 2008 it has played a critical role and is making a difference to this day.

There are several reasons that these partnerships are effective. When practical, the training is local or community based. Students are able to maintain family support and avoid the culture shock of moving to larger centres. Industry provides input on which occupations are in demand so that students taking training have a reasonable chance of gaining employment. Students also have the opportunity to do a work placement at one of our mine sites, so they learn the basics, from catching a plane to work, working a 12-hour shift, to building industry connections.

Communication is a foundation of our programs. We make repeated visits to elementary and high schools in all of our stakeholder communities. We have five community liaisons that are available in our communities most impacted by our mine sites. As well, we use social media such as Facebook as young aboriginal people are tuned into that forum. We have the regular programs, such as summer students and scholarship programs, which are effective at getting people in the door.

• (1010)

All of these things help, but we're not shy in stating that preferential hiring policies for qualified northern residents is a primary driver for our success in achieving aboriginal and northern employment. Qualified northern candidates are hired over others outside the region. It's important to note this is not a soft goal. This is a rule documented within our corporate recruitment policy, as well as with formal agreements with the Province of Saskatchewan. This pushes accountability and consistency.

We also have career transition programs, trades apprenticeships, formal job progressions, and career planning programs for aboriginal employees. As well, our work sites are designed to reduce barriers to aboriginal people. Our work schedule is one week at work and one week off. This allows aboriginal people to reside in their home community and maintain the traditional lifestyle if they choose. We have 13 aircraft pick-up points throughout northern Saskatchewan, which addresses the isolation and remoteness of communities. We have excellent communication services on site, including cellular service and Internet. This allows employees to remain in contact with family, which is important to aboriginal people.

I'd like to mention that Cameco takes our commitment to local and aboriginal employment very seriously. Nevertheless, industry can only do so much to build on the foundation of our success. We know there are many challenges in our stakeholder communities. Despite these challenges, northern Saskatchewan has demonstrated the benefits to be gained when industry has a voice in helping shape adult training programs. As I said, these training programs are an essential entry point for hundreds of northern people into our workforce of aboriginal people. We do see—

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Sir, could I just ask you to wrap up in the next minute or so, please.

**Mr. Russel Mercredi:** Yes, I just have two more sentences.

Again, we do see the need for long-term, stable government funding for training to continue if we are to see further gains in aboriginal employment in our region.

I covered a lot of information in a short period of time. I extend my thanks on behalf of Cameco, and look forward to any follow-up questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, sir.

Thank you to all of our panellists here for their comments.

Now we move into questioning by committee members. We'll start with Ms. Sims from the NDP for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** I want to thank the panellists for coming to bear witness before us and allowing us to ask them some questions.

My first question is for Ms. Flynn from Syncrude.

First of all, I want to thank you for your presentation. It was very enlightening. I'm also wondering, given your successful partnerships—and since 1992 you obviously have a proven track record—if you could elaborate more in terms of your initial consultations with aboriginal communities. In other words, before you came to the lunch program, the dollars for high schools, colleges, and universities of Alberta, what did the creation of your long-term planning look like? How did you get there?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Thank you for the question, Ms. Sims.

Syncrude since 1965 has had an aboriginal relations program. We actually have within the company an aboriginal steering committee of which I am the chair. It encompasses all of the managers of all aspects of our operations that may have an impact on our aboriginal communities, for example, the head of environment, the head of recruitment, etc.

A core pillar of our formal consultation and community relations policy is dialogue with our aboriginal communities to define their needs for Syncrude to seek to understand them, and then work to address them collectively. Something like a hot lunch program would have come out of dialogue with the chief in that particular community indicating that one of the number one barriers to their students learning in school was adequacy of nutrition. That program is the direct result of direct dialogue with a nation.

Each one of the nations that we dialogue with will have different priorities, different asks of us. We very much take an approach that

we are going into a community to listen and to learn what the community's needs and perspectives are and how we can line those up with our own business priorities, rather than go in and say that we're there to do a trades program which there may be no interest in.

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

I really appreciate hearing that the first thing you do is go in and listen, and you learn from the communities.

What percentage of your workers, employees I would say, are female?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Our total corporate workforce is 19.2% female. We also track the percentage of women in leadership positions, which is about 9.2%.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Okay, thank you very much.

Do you find that you have to use different ways to recruit aboriginal women than men who are coming into your program?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Not unlike my colleague at Kinder Morgan, and I believe Cameco is the same, we have a dedicated aboriginal recruiter who is from one of the local communities. They're from Fort Chipewyan. They work directly at the school level with the employment coordinators in each of the regions to make sure that we're aware of all the aboriginal people in the region who are coming into the workforce and interested in working for us. Because that individual is from the region, it's very much a relationship-based approach. I'll give you an example.

This week a chief raised awareness to me of a young man looking for work, a first-year welding apprentice. I immediately went to our head of recruitment and suggested that Syncrude is short of welders and this would be a good partnership. I don't believe it's gender based, I believe it's more a relationship direct contact in the communities perspective.

• (1020)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Okay, that's good. It would be good to see more of our young girls and women also. Sometimes we do have to target in order to get that kind of equity.

Do you provide child care or make provisions for child care?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Syncrude does not currently have a direct corporate child care program. Again, our goal is to make sure there are adequate services within the broader community so we invest heavily in day care, but it's making the size of the pie bigger for everyone in the region, including our employees, rather than just providing service only for our employees. The largest day care provider in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is the YMCA, so we put the vast majority of our funds into the Y for day care.

**The Chair:** Thank you for those answers.

Now we move on to Mrs. McLeod from the Conservative Party.

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

Certainly, it's a really important conversation we're having today, in terms of aboriginal employment and the connection with our resource industries.

I have a question for each person, and I'll ask Mr. Anderson to start.

I'd be very curious to know, is your connection and your relationship with the leaderships of the communities, or do you also have a direct relationship with the manager of the ASETS holder? How do you connect with the person? Obviously our contributions to ASETS through the federal government include items such as child care and some support. That would be question one.

Mr. Anderson, if you could start, and then Ms. Lynne and Mr. Mercredi could answer.

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** Certainly, Ms. McLeod. It's good to see you again.

We most definitely would have the connection at both levels. First and foremost, I think it's critically important that we have chief-to-chief relationships, a senior management-to-council relationship, and that we form them at the very beginning to understand what the needs, the capacity, and the aspirations are of the community.

As you can appreciate, my business being in the pipeline, we will touch between Edmonton and Vancouver over a hundred different aboriginal communities and territories. Our program is designed much like Ms. Flynn's, to be tailored to individual communities' needs, goals, and aspirations.

We'll also have staff-to-staff relationship developed with the ASETS program capacity holder and coordinator and build from that with the clear indication from the top, if you like, in the senior leadership, that this is something which is critically important that we want to pursue.

My colleague, Martha Matthew, from the Kamloops area, has a couple of words to add as well.

**Ms. Martha Matthew (Consultant - Training and Employment, Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project, Kinder Morgan Canada):** I have come from the ASETS community, so that relationship, in particular in B.C., is very strong with my former ASETS colleagues there. As well, I have had the opportunity to meet with my colleagues in Alberta through various national meetings. Definitely there is a strength there.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Ms. Flynn.

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Certainly we would be the same. We dialogue at multiple levels. Chiefs to chiefs are very important to us. They're actually tracked to make sure we have them on a regular basis. We also have elder advisory committees from each of the first nations that work with our consultation staff. We will have formal consultation on regulatory applications or formal issues on our plant site. We also track all of our informal, more relationship, constant contact with the community activities.

We make sure that Syncrude isn't just going in when we need to formally consult, but we have constant contact—

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Thank you. Sorry, I want to get one more question in and I wanted Mr. Mercredi to respond also.

Do you have a formal relationship with the ASETS holder?

**Mr. Russel Mercredi:** Yes, we do, through those two programs I mentioned, Northern Career Quest and the Mineral Sector Steering Committee. They are fully aware of what our plans are and what we ask of them as well.

With regard to the leadership of communities, we do have formal and informal meetings. We have five community liaisons who reside right in the communities, who can meet with members on a daily basis. As well, we have formal channels such as round tables or collaboration agreements with specific communities.

• (1025)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Great.

I really appreciated the comments in terms of the industry and the industry identifying the needs and it actually connecting with the goals, dreams, and aspirations of the communities. Certainly, as we look towards moving forward with our Canada job grant, that is a goal where we have the participation of the Government of Canada, industry, and of course the province.

Within your industries right now, do you have provincial programs that are intersecting with what you're doing also?

Mr. Anderson, I will ask you to lead off with that.

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** I think primarily we've worked, Ms. McLeod, with provincial programs that exist, for example, some of the apprenticeship programs at some of the institutions and trade schools. We've also intersected with Skill Builders, which I referred to earlier. It's a utility-based program that is provincially supported. Any other provincial program that is designed to identify trades and build the capacity of trades we'd be directly tied to.

I might add that one of the concerns we have is, at the high school level, the absence of any real trades programs in B.C. in particular and perhaps beyond that. We still see trades being post-secondary programs. Back in my day, when I went to high school, I went to a trades school where children at the ages of 16 and 17 were starting to learn trades within the high school program. That's been largely dropped from the curriculum of high schools these days. I think there's a niche there that we should revisit as we look over the next generation for trades.

**The Chair:** We don't have time to move to the other two witnesses, but if you wish to respond in further exchanges here, please feel free to.

Now we go to Mr. Cuzner from the Liberal Party for five minutes.

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

I'll start with Ms. Flynn.

I just want to go back.... I fully respect Neil Young's opinions on the oil sands and oil sands development, but I just wish he had been much more informed, particularly with regard to the work that's been done with first nations communities in Fort McMurray.

Having been out there back when Syncrude was just firing up and it was still Great Canadian Oil Sands across the street, I know there was a focus then on allowing opportunities for first nations and first nations communities. I know you continue to work on that to try to improve it. It's in your own best interests and Syncrude identified that early on.

I would argue that Suncor and Syncrude could probably be used as two companies with best practices in engagement in first nations communities.

I want you to talk a little bit about Fort Chip. Having had the opportunity to go to Fort Chip back in the early eighties, I can tell you there wasn't a whole lot there. You're talking about what you're doing now is fly-in, fly-out, but is Syncrude or Suncor actually doing some business there? There's some manufacturing there in that community, as well. Is Syncrude doing that?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Mr. Cuzner, it's nice to see you again.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation actually has a business up in Fort Chip called Chip Manufacturing. They supply clothing, the wristlets, the elastic protectors that go around the sleeves of coveralls to protect them from getting caught in machinery. Those are manufactured up in Fort Chip by Acden. They're our sole source, I believe, for the entire industry in the oil sands and in Fort McMurray for that piece of clothing.

Both Syncrude and Suncor, as well as many of the other oil sands companies working in our region, do business, large sums of business, with both the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. The Fort McKay Group of Companies is obviously right on our doorstep and has a significant number of businesses providing services to the oil sands. All of us are using the services from those first nations.

It is important to point out that for Syncrude at least, business is business, and the business we choose to do and are able to do with first nations or aboriginal companies is because it makes good business sense for us. We will not change that approach based on any potential concerns that are expressed to us on the consultation side of our relationship. We actually keep those two dialogues separate.

We believe investing in the employment and business development side is something that helps mitigate our impacts from our operations on the traditional lands of aboriginal peoples. That's why we focus on it so much.

• (1030)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Perhaps I can get comments from each of you about your relationships with the educational institutions.

I know that Syncrude has a relationship with Keyano College. Is there a focus there with drawing first nations into those programs?

Others might want to comment as well on relationships with the institutions.

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Syncrude has a strong relationship with our local community college, Keyano College. In fact I'm the chair of the board of governors. Suncor and Shell Canada also have representatives on the board of directors. We're also active in advisory services to curriculum development through all of the programs the college offers.

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** I can confirm that Kinder Morgan and Trans Mountain are active with several institutions, in British Columbia in particular, to develop programs for specific trades in advance of the massive construction we plan to undertake in 2016-17. These are programs for welders, machinists, mechanics, equipment operators, etc.

Thompson Rivers and UBC are both institutions that we're working with right now.

**Mr. Russel Mercredi:** Cameco is very involved with the local regional college, Northlands College. We provide curriculum development. We participate in program selections that have a high chance to lead to employment in our industry. We donate the equipment that's used at our operations to their training programs so that students are learning what they will use once they become employed and so forth.

Pretty much on a daily basis we're involved with the local regional college.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Shory from the Conservative Party, for five minutes.

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Thank you to the witnesses for taking the time to help this committee better understand how we can ensure an increase in opportunities for aboriginal people in the workforce.

I will be looking for comments from Ms. Flynn as well. I am from Calgary, and I know that Syncrude is one of the largest private sector employers in Alberta. Syncrude has also contributed more than \$14 billion through royalty payments and federal and provincial taxes.

Being the largest industrial employer of aboriginal people in Canada, with 8% of its employee force from aboriginal communities, I'd like you to give the committee an example of the training program Syncrude offers currently.

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Thank you, Mr. Shory. It's nice to see you.

Cameco would be the largest overall employer of aboriginal people in the country from an industrial perspective. Syncrude is among one of the other leaders behind them, aspiring to achieve the levels that they have, which are truly impressive.

From a training perspective, we have our own in-house apprenticeship support programs that we put our employees through. We also rely heavily on our local community college, Keyano, as well as NAIT, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, in Edmonton. We provide all support for funds and training for our employees to go through any type of trade and technical employment.

It's also important to note that we actually have an employees' children's scholarship program, more than \$2,000 per year per child of an employee for pursuing post-secondary education. We consider trades and technology programs to be part of that. We provide funding for our existing workforce as well as for the children of our employees to pursue trades. We invest heavily in programs for Keyano and NAIT to support in-house trades training in key areas where we are short.

•(1035)

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** Thank you.

All Canadian employers, Ms. Flynn, have different practices when it comes to hiring. How does Syncrude attract and retain aboriginals within its workforce? Furthermore, what impediments are there currently to hiring aboriginals in your workforce?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** Our dedicated aboriginal recruiter is a key part of that, particularly in the local community. From a broader perspective we are active with the Aboriginal Human Resource Council, which is a sector council in Canada that links up through programs like Inclusion Works. It provides us an outlet to more professional and technical prospective aboriginal employees.

The real key is trying to make sure that all aboriginal people have the potential and the ability to pursue advanced education so that they can come work for us, and to make sure that when they do, we have a workforce that is truly respectful of their culture. That includes things like policies that respect the need for greater amounts of leave during a death of someone in the community, for example, which is unique to aboriginal culture. We are aware of who's out there, trying to grow that pool, and then making sure that we have an inclusive workforce when they arrive.

**Mr. Devinder Shory:** Thank you.

Could you all make a quick comment on what you think is the best way to improve labour market outcomes for aboriginals?

Go ahead, Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** I touched on that earlier.

If I had to single out one thing that I think could provide the most value, it's continuing to have the very tight connection between industry needs and training programs available. We believe our job is to identify what the needs of the industry are looking forward, not just today, but looking forward, identifying where the gaps are, where the skills needs are, both regionally as well as nationally, and then fitting those needs into programs that would be government and industry assisted. That connection needs to remain tight. We can't be on two different agendas, if you like.

**The Chair:** Madame Groguhé from the NDP.

[Translation]

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

I want to thank the witnesses for providing us with this information.

My question is addressed to all of you.

The importance of facilitating the training of aboriginal people has been highlighted, among other things to encourage the development of the businesses on these sites.

Could you describe any particular challenges you have experienced in retaining aboriginal employees who are trained and have been hired by your companies?

[English]

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** I can start if you'd like.

We haven't experienced any material retention problems. I think we recognize proximity and transportation challenges. We try to tailor the employment opportunity as locally as we can. As you can appreciate, we have a long linear infrastructure. Our footprint is very spread out, so finding the match is very important. We take that part very seriously. As the others would, we also recognize unique cultural and heritage needs and important aspects of the community, and how those may affect employment.

I think the last piece is making sure that the fit is right. In other words, we can derive our own benefits and benefits to the community by both employment and contracting. Sometimes a contracting relationship is more suitable for a circumstance than a pure employment relationship. The other advantage to that is that it gives that individual or that small company the opportunity to pursue other avenues, not just with me but with other businesses.

•(1040)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Forgive me, I think I am going to change things around a bit. Since I don't have much time, I am going to go to my second question. I think that your reply, Mr. Anderson, is also going to cover the other questions to some degree.

We have heard that the training programs to prepare aboriginal persons to fill certain positions are sometimes not available. In that case, do your companies go through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program?

[English]

**The Chair:** Which of the witnesses would you like to address?

**Ms. Kara Flynn:** I'll start.

Syncrude has a very strong relationship with the Alberta Building Trades Council, and on the rare occasions when we have peak workforce needs that exceed the Canadian capacity, we work with the building trades for them to identify, through the American building trades or the Irish or others, a supply of workers who come in through the building trades council. They're certified by the trade union. They pay dues and then they are brought to our site under the temporary foreign worker program in partnership with the building trades. We as a company can be confident that both the Alberta building trades as well as the broader Canadian building trades have exhausted all potential supply before we do that.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Mr. Anderson, could you answer us on that topic?

[English]

**Mr. Ian Anderson:** I would only add I entirely agree with Ms. Flynn. It's a pool of last resort. Our efforts would be to maximize the existing talent pool within the communities. We see the first nations community as being a largely untapped pool that needs more development.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:** Let's talk about promotion. I think that Mr. Mercredi referred to this a little.

Does the company have programs to promote employees? Do they have to get further training to acquire additional skills? How does it work? How are things done in the context of that program?

[*English*]

**Mr. Russel Mercredi:** Yes, we have several programs to allow people to move up within the company. Typically most aboriginal people are hired at the entry levels, so it's very important to move them into those supervisory roles that come with experience. We have some formal programs such as our career transition program whereby we pay employees' wages while they return to university to obtain a degree and perhaps move to a more professional role.

We have career development services when we meet with employees and find out what their long-term goals are and set up customized individual training programs for them so they learn leadership and computer skills, whatever it takes to move them to that next level. That's really what our focus has been lately, our

internal workforce and how to move people up within the company, particularly aboriginals.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that. That's over time. We have come to the end of our time here today at committee.

Thank you on my and the committee's behalf for taking the time today to explain to us what you are doing within your corporate structures and your businesses to assist aboriginals in developing their skills and becoming involved in your companies. We appreciate that. I think sometimes it takes people like you to describe to us the depth of your commitment. It helps us to get a thorough understanding of what's happening on the ground within your companies, so we appreciate that. Thank you again for taking the time.

That's the end of the committee meeting.

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