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Chair

Mr. Bryan May

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

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• (1620)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome, everybody.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the study of experiential learning and pathways to employment for Canadian youth is getting under way. This is very exciting.

We are televised today, just so everybody knows to keep their ties straight.

We are very pleased to welcome the Honourable Patty Hajdu, member of Parliament and Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Patty, we're going to get right into it and give you the floor to speak, and then, of course, I'm sure we'll have a number of questions for you.

Thank you so much.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

[Translation]

I am happy that the committee has decided to study the matter of experiential learning for Canadian youth. Investing in experiential learning has proven very lucrative for the young people who join the labour market. Being given an opportunity to learn about one's profession is particularly important for vulnerable youth who might not have the opportunity to do so otherwise. I thank you for doing this important work.

[English]

This afternoon I'd like to discuss the multiple measures our government is putting in place to address this situation and the results we've achieved to date on this issue. I'm also going to give you a broad overview of the kinds of enduring challenges that our country will be facing in the coming years and how we intend to respond as we move forward.

First of all, investing in work-integrated learning pays huge dividends in the success of young people in the labour market. Getting a foot in the door or a chance to learn about the profession is particularly critical for vulnerable youth as well, who might not have the opportunity to get that chance otherwise. We need to provide youth with the tools, the education, the training, and the opportunities they need to fully succeed in their chosen careers.

Around the world, the labour market is evolving, and we need to keep pace. Job requirements continue to change, and workers' credentials are not necessarily matching the skills that employers are seeking. We need to put greater emphasis on essential skills and something that employers tell me about all the time: soft skills, such as how to manage a difficult employee and how to answer a phone and provide good customer service no matter what occupation you're in, as well as digital skills.

We need to make sure that all young Canadians have a fair chance to succeed. Providing opportunities for workplace experience is an important part of our effort to do just that, as work experience is critical to a successful transition for youth from school to work. These opportunities benefit young people. Of course, employers often offer higher starting salaries to graduates who have work placement experience.

Apprenticeship is also a proven model for transitioning into well-paying jobs in the skilled trades, which are in such great demand. In fact, more than 80% of apprentices were successful in securing employment in 2015.

I'm going to give you some examples of what we've put in place to support Canada's young people to help them transition to the workplace.

[Translation]

The facts show that work experience is the key to a successful transition for youth. Employers generally offer high starting salaries to graduates who have practical experience. The labour market is evolving, and the help we provide to facilitate the transition from school to the workplace must follow suit.

[English]

We've provided learning opportunities through the career focus stream of the youth employment strategy, which supported over 6,500 youth in finding work placements in 2016-17. We've also nearly doubled Canada Summer Jobs compared to the previous government.

We recently launched a new partnership with industry and post-secondary education institutes to offer 10,000 new work-integrated learning placements for students in the STEM fields and business, with an investment of \$73 million over four years. In addition to our investments in student placements through Mitacs, we'll help create up to 60,000 paid work placements over the next five years.

We've also put in place measures to ensure that young Canadians are always appropriately compensated for their work placement internships. Bill C-63 includes amendments to the Canada Labour Code that would prohibit unpaid internships within federally regulated private sectors unless they are part of the requirements for an educational program and ensure that interns who are unpaid are covered by labour standard protections such as maximum hours of work, weekly days of rest, and general holidays.

We know that young people make better decisions about their education and career path when they have good data and information that helps them make those decisions. The OECD and other research confirms that good-quality and timely information and advice play an important role in informing young people's aspirations. For this reason, we've enhanced the Canada job bank, and we're going to continue to modernize it with current technology platforms so that it will be youth-centred and user-friendly, something that all the young people in my life are quite excited about.

On another note, I cannot stress enough how much financial assistance is essential to removing barriers to post-secondary education. We've made very important enhancements in this area. For example, we increased non-repayable Canada student grants by 50% and made them available to more students from low- and middle-income families. This means that starting in the 2017-18 school year, over 400,000 students from low- and middle-income families will receive up to \$3,000 in non-repayable financial aid each and every year. Approximately 46,000 of those students will be eligible for the first time for the Canada student grant for full-time students.

We've also introduced a fixed student contribution, allowing students who work to continue to do so without having to worry about a reduction in the amount of financial assistance they will receive. Now no student has to repay a Canada student loan until they're earning at least \$25,000 a year.

We've also renewed our investment in Pathways to Education Canada for an additional four years, starting in 2018-19. If you haven't found out about this program yet, I highly encourage you to take a look. This program works to make sure that at-risk youth are able to complete high school and transition to post-secondary studies.

We continue to make significant efforts to increase the take-up of the Canada learning bond. In May of 2017 an important milestone was reached: one million Canadian children are now enrolled and have more affordable post-secondary education in their future. Last week we launched a call for concepts, which is really our way to look for new and innovative ways to increase awareness and uptake of the Canada learning bond. We encourage organizations with ideas to submit their concepts by January 16, 2018.

The renewal of the youth employment strategy, or YES, gives us a really good opportunity to work with all our partners to ensure that young Canadians have all the necessary support that they need to succeed. The youth employment strategy has already produced results for young people, real results across the country over the last 20 years, but we have to acknowledge that a lot has happened in the last 20 years. Times have changed.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

In addition, we are just beginning to explore the renewed Youth Employment Strategy. Your study will help to guide our work.

[*English*]

Your work will ensure that we can understand the new needs of young people across this country. It will also help us to understand the measures that are working well and need to stay the same, as well as what kinds of things need to change to make sure we're reaching our target goal—namely, that every young person across this country has the supports they need to access post-secondary education and to access the kinds of experiences that will help them move forward in meaningful work, good middle-class jobs, across this country.

The current study of the committee will undoubtedly greatly inform our work. Through this renewal, we're exploring four key areas for action: one, supporting smoother transitions from school to work; two, helping young people develop skills to keep pace with the changing nature of work; three, helping vulnerable youth to meet their potential; and finally, exploring how employers could play a greater leadership role in youth employment.

Provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, along with numerous stakeholders, also play a critical role, as they provide a range of supports for youth. We'll be looking at how we can increase and amplify our partnerships with all of our stakeholders. I'm very interested in learning more about how others in Canada are supporting youth transitions into the labour market. I'm also interested in lessons from other countries. We can all benefit from sharing best practices from the experiences of others in Canada and internationally.

Youth need opportunities to be active citizens and community leaders. Service and volunteer experience is another way in which young people can build skills and personal growth while giving back to the community. We'll soon be launching the design phase of a new youth service initiative. Youth will be directly engaged to build a program that responds to their interests and serves their community. This means we'll be building a program that has been designed by youth, for youth.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, we know that Canada's future prosperity depends on young Canadians getting the skills and experience that they need to succeed and that employers are looking for. This is an essential way that we can continue to ensure a growing economy in a way that works for everyone. Successful transitions from school to work represent a socio-economic win-win for us: students get the hands-on experience they need to succeed and employers find the talent they're desperately seeking.

Active, healthy citizens who are pursuing their aspirations and driving economic growth are critical for us to change and adapt this economy, which brings new challenges but, I believe, great opportunity for Canada. I have every confidence that Canadian young people will seize those opportunities if we help pave the way. We just can't afford to leave so much talent behind. We can't afford to see young Canadians either not pursuing their education or not getting jobs aligned with their skills and training, so the study that this committee is undertaking right now is extremely timely. It will greatly inform our work, and I'm very glad you've chosen it.

Thank you so much for inviting me.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

In my haste to get things moving today, I failed to recognize a few people. I would like to recognize that we are joined here today by Louise Levonian, deputy minister, from the Department of Employment and Social Development. Welcome back to this committee.

I also want to extend a welcome back to MP Brigitte Sansoucy. We've missed you.

Also, thank you for helping us out today, MP Picard.

We're going to get started with questions. I understand the minister is able to extend her stay for an additional 15 minutes, so we will have the minister until 5:15. That gives us about 15 minutes to deal with some committee business.

We will start off with MP Wong.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, Minister.

I'm really disappointed at the fact that the youth unemployment rate is now at 13%, which is very high. Then there is the fact that you seem to have increased the number of summer jobs, which probably has not really been the truth. The truth is that the number of weeks the young person can work has been greatly reduced, and for the short term, there's no way these students can find another job. That is the problem with this summer job strategy.

These are my statements. I'm really disappointed at what's happening right now.

I'll share my time with my colleague.

• (1630)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Welcome, Madam Minister. We certainly welcome this study.

[*Translation*]

We have just heard an important apology from all of the opposition parties, and also from Prime Minister Trudeau.

What concerns me is that the Prime Minister had made promises concerning workers in the regions, and seasonal workers in particular. I am thinking, for instance, about workers in New Brunswick and those in Quebec regions like Charlevoix, the North Shore, the Lower St. Lawrence and the Gaspé Peninsula.

We want our young people to work, we want them to have jobs. However, we must not forget that there are also young seasonal workers who experience a black hole in the spring, when employment insurance benefits are coming to an end but seasonal work has not yet started.

Madam Minister, why is the government breaking its promise by not introducing transition measures, and by maintaining this black hole that leaves seasonal workers in anguish?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Blaney, we understand that there is a challenge, and my department is looking at that very closely. Minister Duclos will be happy to answer questions at a later date, but certainly the deputy is aware of the issue and is working on it right now with the department and will have more to say at a later date.

In terms of youth unemployment, the youth unemployment rate has remained somewhat stagnant. In 2015, it was 10%, which is lower than its historical average of 12.1% since 1976. Although that's quite high, and I would agree with the member that we want to see that rate lowered, certainly internationally we're doing all right compared to some of our international partners. For example, the long-term unemployment rate we have is 5.1% versus 21.8%, which is the OECD average.

That is not to diminish our concern, which is why we're here and why we're looking at rejuvenating the youth employment strategy, but I would say we're definitely tracking in the right direction. I think there's more to do.

In terms of Canada Summer Jobs, it's an incredible program. It provides young people all across Canada an opportunity to get work experience, in some cases for the very first time in their lives. That's a paid work experience opportunity. Employers as well oftentimes would not have an opportunity to hire a young person if it were not for Canada Summer Jobs. We're very proud of that program.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Minister, you mentioned the Canada Summer Jobs program. There is a black hole there as well. It is true that the program has been expanded and that more young people can now participate. However, you reduced the length of the internships. That means that young people work during half of the summer, and then they face a black hole because they don't have time to find another job. In addition, the length of the work period does not allow them to acquire the necessary experience.

So, there is a problem for seasonal workers. You say you have a solution, but these workers are waiting.

The same thing applies to the Canada Summer Jobs program. Why did you reduce the length of the internships? In other words, you seem to be spreading more peanut butter, but in the final analysis, there is not more. Our young people are being penalized because they find themselves without work after their internship, when they are not yet back in school.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The response we've had from employers and young people across Canada has been phenomenal. In fact, in many communities, MPs have come up to me and talked about the success of Canada Summer Jobs in their riding. Young people are grateful for that experience. To get paid work experience is no small feat in this country, especially in the summer, when you have a volume of young people out there looking for well-paying, decent jobs. The competition is intense.

From the young people who have been able to score one of these Canada Summer Jobs—and I have met hundreds and hundreds of them across the country—I heard nothing but praise for the program and the fact that they had an opportunity to work oftentimes in a sector very aligned with their studies. Whether I was visiting on the west coast, on the east coast, or up north in my own riding, I met students who were taking part in the tourism industry or in the business sector. Even small business is now able to access Canada Summer Jobs, which allows young people who have perhaps an interest in entrepreneurship to get that well-paying summer job that will help them offset the cost of studies and also give them the sector experience that so many times they are looking for.

As a matter of fact, at a recreational facility in one community, I met a young person working in a home for people with disabilities. The executive director told me she had started in that position with that company as a Canada Summer Jobs placement, and 10 or 15 years later she was running the joint. It was really affirming to see that not only did it work for short-term employment but it also worked for determining a career path.

•(1635)

The Chair: Thank you. That's your time.

We now go over to MP Fortier, please, for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister Hajdu, thank you very much for being here with us today.

We must recognize that the beginning of this study will allow us to determine where improvements could be made, and, according to what I understand about your objectives, what other opportunities could be found to improve the Youth Employment Strategy.

I had the pleasure of being the president of the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française 20 years ago. It was at that time that the government of the day announced the Youth Employment Strategy. As we know, changes have been made to it since then. The current Liberal government has continued to invest in the strategy, and I think it is important to recognize that. That said, the situation

has changed over the last 20 years, and technology has had an important impact on the labour market.

Why do today's young people need new skills and more adequate experience in the face of the transformations brought about by technology? Will the proposed measures or programs allow us to keep pace with the rapid evolution of this economy?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: It's great that you've come full circle from chairing the committee to now being to participate in the rejuvenation of the youth employment strategy.

You're absolutely right that changing technology is one of the critical components of looking at a renewed youth employment strategy. Interestingly enough, often youth are leading the way in terms of being able to adapt to technology very rapidly.

I think we have a couple of problems on our hands. One, are the academic institutions—the polytechnics, the colleges, and so forth—training for the right sets of skills that employers are looking for? Two, are employers considering new graduates as the resource they really are?

Recently, when I was announcing the work-integrated learning program, the student work placement program, I had an opportunity to meet some of the companies that will be utilizing the student work placements. Many of them talked about how great it was to see young people coming right out of school into their workplace. They talked about the benefit to their corporation. They talked about this new way of thinking, about how often young people would come with a different perspective and new solutions to old problems, and how, by the way, they were very adept at using technology and could quickly learn new systems and new ways of doing things. That's because, first of all, they were studying them, but also because they had that lens, which many times older workers struggle with. It was a real opportunity to hear not just how this will be beneficial for young people but also how employers are saying that they need students with the abilities to be flexible and to rapidly acquire knowledge in new ways.

When we provide that matchmaking program through something like, say, the student work placement program, it really does bring together young people who are desperately seeking that first paid experience and employers who are looking for talent and skill but also for that adaptability that helps their corporations grow. I saw many examples of this.

In some of the spaces I was visiting where some of the high-tech firms are doing things I can't even describe in words because I am an old person now, the workforce is very young. When I would walk onto the floor, it was astounding to me to see that oftentimes the people would be under 30. Employers told us that they see youth as an asset. We need to spread that idea throughout the employer community.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Thank you.

I'd like to ask you another question.

I had the privilege of doing a lot of door-to-door canvassing over the past year. Young women told me that it was still difficult for them to find jobs in engineering, mathematics and science.

Could programs or measures be put in place to encourage women to choose engineering, mathematics and science, and support them on that path?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much. That's a great question.

As you know, MP Fortier, my first role was Minister of Status of Women, so I spent a lot of time talking about the barriers that women face, especially in some of what we call non-traditional sectors, where they're dramatically under-represented. You're absolutely right that STEM is one of those areas. Though we see women choosing those courses of study more and more often, we're not seeing the corresponding numbers of women in those fields. We know that it's more than just women choosing to study in STEM; it's actually other barriers that women are facing.

We are trying to work with employers to provide additional incentives for employers to be thoughtful about how they recruit women and retain women in their sectors, which traditionally have been male-dominated. For example, the union training and innovation program, which is a program we announced last summer, is looking for unions to come forward and thoughtfully tell us what kinds of things they can do to recruit people who are under-represented, including women, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and newcomers to Canada. This is a real win-win, because also, as you may know, we have about 110,000 unfilled skilled trades positions in this country, so we really are missing an opportunity when we're even unintentionally biased in the way that we create space for women in some of these non-traditional sectors.

We also, through the student work placement program, are providing additional incentives to employers who are thoughtfully thinking about how they recruit. When they hire a woman, a person who is indigenous, a person with disabilities, or a newcomer, they will receive an additional incentive in terms of compensation to help support that hire.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We now go over to Madam Sansoucy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madam Minister, thank you for your presentation.

At the beginning of a study such as the one we are undertaking, I think it is important to define the role of the federal government well. We know that the constitutional power to enact laws that concern education rests with provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Federal jurisdiction applies solely to first nations education, as well as to education for the personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Coast Guard and inmates in correctional facilities.

Recommendation 3 of the final report of the Expert Panel on Youth Employment has something interesting to say about the

support the federal spending power provides through the Canada Social Transfer. The recommendation states that in order to rethink youth employment programs, the government of Canada should consider the possibility of transferring youth employment programs to provincial and territorial governments. The Expert Panel on Youth Employment even asks that the government make public the results of this reflexion in the course of the next 12 months.

In addition, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum does specify that apprenticeship is regulated by the provinces and territories.

This brings me to my question. Since the role of the federal government in this matter has to be executed through partnerships with the provinces and territories, and since in your mandate letter, the prime minister asks you to cooperate with the provincial and territorial governments and post-secondary institutions, can you tell us about the partnerships you have established with the provinces and territories? In your opinion, what is the role of the federal government in those partnerships?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely, and we play a critical role in the form of LMDAs and LMTAs, the transfer agreements we have with provinces and territories, through which we transfer sums of money to the provinces and territories. We've committed an additional \$1.8 billion over six years in those provincial and territorial transfers to ensure that provinces have the support they need to pursue skills training in a way that's relevant to them. In those negotiations, we've agreed to a shared set of outcomes whereby we'll be able to measure outcomes together and benchmark those outcomes so that we can understand the results of those transfers.

In terms of the recommendation of the expert panel on youth employment, we still think there is a space for the federal government to show leadership. We have, of course, the Canada Labour Code, and many employers are federally regulated. We also are very concerned about young people who fall through the cracks of provincial programs and who maybe aren't getting those services in a way that makes sense to them, and we think we can be a partner and augment what provinces are doing.

We know that we have provincial jurisdiction to respect, and we of course do that, but we have an opportunity to work with our provincial and territorial partners to make sure we leverage what they're doing and ensure that people who, for one reason or another, may not be able to access services through their provincial or territorial services have another place to go, and that would be their country.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

As we have just said, your mandate letter and Budget 2017 both contain recommendations from the Expert Panel on Youth Employment. I am going to focus on three of these recommendations.

In recommendation 8, which discusses updating the Canada labour standards, the group suggests amending part III of the Canada Labour Code in order to recognize new types of employment. You have already begun to do this by eliminating unpaid internships.

Recommendation 9 suggests broadening eligibility for employment insurance. Young people are particularly affected by the eligibility rules. The point would be to lower the eligibility criteria, and they would be the same throughout the country. This is a demand that that has been made by practically all of the organizations that work with the unemployed, everywhere in Canada. They also recommend that returning to school be added to the valid grounds for leaving work for young workers. The idea is that young people would not be penalized if they leave a job to return to school. To me that is a very important point.

The third recommendation I wanted to raise with you is the one that refers to obtaining better quality data. Indeed, when one wants to study a situation, obtaining statistics is always an issue.

I would like to hear about the government's response to these recommendations which were submitted to it last June.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: As you know, under my role as the federal labour minister, I am looking at the Canada labour standards. We're doing that work right now in consultation with partners and stakeholders, with unions and employers. We're holding consultations to make sure we understand the new landscape. As you know, it's work that continues. There are pieces that we can take action on right now, but comprehensively, we want to make sure that we work in that tripartite relationship and respect employers and the labour movement so that when we put forward those proposals, they'll be well received and we'll have the right answers.

In terms of young people and their eligibility for EI and returning to study, we have committed to making it easier for older people to study. That would include older or young people, I suppose, who have been in school, who have gone into the labour market, who have not pursued their education, and who have had to leave the labour market or are trying to increase or enhance their skills. We've talked about that. We've put in some flexibility around older workers. Those measures would include young or older workers.

It's something that I personally feel very passionate about, as many of you may have heard. I mean, I didn't graduate with my degree until I was 28. It was very challenging. I was a full-time employee and a single mother with young children. I'm well aware of the challenges faced by older or younger people who have for one reason or another not completed their course of study or who have a desire to go back and upgrade their skills. We think it's worthwhile to invest in those individuals. We know that every opportunity they get to enhance their skills and improve their skills means that a better job is out there waiting for them. Every opportunity for skills development results in an opportunity for them to increase their earning potential, which ultimately will have an intergenerational impact.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go to MP Ruimy, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Thank you very much, Minister, for being here today.

I am a huge fan of Canada Summer Jobs. The first year we did it, it had always been closed to small business in my riding. I changed that. I actually followed 90% of all the students who were hired. I went to their organizations. I watched what they did. I watched how they connected it to their organizations. In the second year, we went out and called up 500 businesses, and we pushed. We ended up getting about \$100,000 more in funding, so I've seen a tremendous rise in that.

In fact, to my understanding, with Canada Summer Jobs we've doubled the amount from what it was previously in this country. I've seen the results. It's a fantastic program that, if served well, can actually give students practice in what they're learning in school.

I'll be sharing my time with MP Morrissey, but first, many people in my riding have gained valuable experience thanks to the youth employment strategy. You mentioned that you are revitalizing the program. Can you explain that in a little bit more detail?

● (1650)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The revitalization is of the youth employment strategy as a whole. As you mentioned, the commitment to double Canada Summer Jobs is something we continue to work on, and we're very close to doubling it. As you mentioned, there were some challenges in the first year around employers knowing that it was available.

I want to thank all the MPs who went out and made sure that employers in their ridings knew about Canada Summer Jobs and applied. We'll continue that work to make sure that employers know about the program and know that they can apply for the program and that every student possible has an opportunity to access the program.

The work we're doing right now on the youth employment strategy includes Canada Summer Jobs, and of course we are open to looking at Canada Summer Jobs and how we can make the program better, because better is always possible. We're also looking at other aspects of the youth employment strategy, which would include things like helping people after they're finished their education to get that first job in their particular field. The student work-integrated learning program is one example.

This is part of the study you're doing, and it is a key component of the study you're doing in terms of experiential learning. We're very curious to see whether we can increase our efforts in that space.

It will also be about how we ensure that vulnerable youth get that shot at success. Many of you have skills link programs in your ridings, and when I meet some of the skills link participants across the country, I see these are the young kids of age 16 to 24 who are not in school, who are not employed, and who are often struggling with profound challenges in their life, whether it's homelessness, substance use, poor literacy skills, or just a total lack of self-confidence. We can't leave those kids behind, either, because if we do that, first we're losing out on an opportunity to have all that talent contribute to the growth of our country, and then the longer people stay unemployed, the more entrenched that becomes and the harder it becomes for them to get a job. At the end of the day, that is a cost rather than an opportunity for prosperity.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Thank you.

You speak of the skills link training program. That's another program in my riding, and every time there is an intake, I spend two hours with the entire group, because they need to know that their government is there for them and that they have the ability to move forward. It's a fantastic program.

I'm going to pass it off to MP Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

First, I want to correct a couple of comments. The youth unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in 15 years. I think that was due to one of the moves our government made, Minister, which you were part of, and which was to remove the very punitive new entrance requirement, which disproportionately impacted young people in the country when accessing the EI program. In fact, it was the former government that cut \$20 million from the youth employment strategy.

Minister, my question focuses on the comment you made, because it's in an area that I focus on as an MP. Your statement was that we need to ensure that all young Canadians have a chance to succeed and that we cannot afford to leave these youth behind. This is for those in the age category 17 to 29, for which you have a specific program that captures disadvantaged youth to reorient them into the workplace. These are people you referred to in your opening comments.

Could you speak to this issue and to the ongoing need to put more and more dollars into this stream of your funding programs? I believe it is one of your four key pillar areas. They're programs such as the Pathways program, which is an excellent program you have, Minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: You're absolutely right. The problem with austerity budgeting and balanced budgeting is that cuts have to happen. The youth employment strategy budget was cut by \$20 million under one of my colleagues, Pierre Poilievre, and 65,000 fewer youth were assisted by youth employment strategies during the Conservatives' tenure. That's a significant drop.

I'm glad you raised that point, because I think it's important that we understand that when we invest in Canadians, we get the best out of Canadians and we get the best out of our economy. The Prime Minister is famous for saying that confident countries invest in themselves, and that's exactly what the youth employment strategy

should be doing. It should be investing in the promise of Canadians and investing in the promise of our country.

Let me just tell you about Pathways. I want to get to Pathways, because you're very right that Pathways is an incredible program and we do support Pathways, even though the program is not under federal jurisdiction. It's not really a federal program. However, Pathways is a wraparound program. I know a lot about it because in my previous role as a public health planner, I was really inspired by Pathways and I wanted to see if we could bring it to Thunder Bay. Pathways helps young people from incredibly disadvantaged situations see the potential of post-secondary education.

One of the challenges of living in poverty is that oftentimes you don't ever see anyone around you who has made it out of poverty. Pathways to Education, through a combination of tutoring, training, connections to post-secondary institutions, mentorship, and financial support, creates an actual pathway to post-secondary education. I think their graduation rate is somewhere in the range of 86%.

• (1655)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Picard, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): I will share my time with Mr. Sangha, if you don't mind.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, Minister.

According to what I understand, you drew inspiration from some of the best practices abroad, particularly in Europe, to develop your approach.

I would like to know what type of programs inspired the changes and the model you are implementing here in Canada.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: That's an excellent question. I think other countries are doing some things that we certainly could model. When I had an opportunity to visit Germany—this, I think, is where I was the most inspired—I saw that true relationship between government, employers, and academic institutions. It starts as young as high school, as a matter of fact.

The critical component was really the three parties working so closely together. Government was there to provide some support, to provide the legislative element, and to provide some of the funding that allowed this program to go on. The employers were there in terms of their commitment to having the skills training and experiential learning on site in their shops. I visited thyssenkrupp, for example, a large steel manufacturer. Some of you may be familiar with them. They have 25% apprenticeship rates with their employees.

That partnership we witnessed is something I think we're very interested in. We have some challenges in that we have a different set of jurisdictional realities in Canada than perhaps they have in Germany, but we think there's a very promising model in bringing together government, academic institutes such as colleges and polytechnics, and employers to create opportunities for experiential learning. That's what's advised us in the student work placement program—that opportunity to create those relationships.

Just as in Germany, what is happening in Canada already is showing some promise in that employers are saying, "I've invested this time in this young person, and it's been a worthwhile investment." They've invested half their salary, in some cases, and the time to train them to a very specific role in their company. They get a chance to actually see how that individual will work out. That investment propels them to make a permanent job offer. That's exactly what we're hoping for with an increase in student work placements.

Mr. Michel Picard: I'll give Mr. Sangha the rest of my time.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

In my riding of Brampton Centre, and all over the ridings, we feel there is a shortage of manpower. Businesses are looking desperately for manpower. I feel that the student work placement program is the best program to put students into the workforce. What are you doing to involve businesses in the student work placement program? What type of businesses will take part in this program?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: That's an excellent question. I think you're absolutely right that if we don't have the co-operation of employers, we really can't move forward. That's why the student work placement program is so important, because it doesn't only provide financial incentives to businesses in the form of subsidization of the rate of pay for the young person, but it also provides, as I was just talking about, the opportunity to play a bit of a matchmaker role. It takes students from sectors that are often experiencing those great shortages and matches them up with employers who are looking for those specific skills. These are the STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—and business sectors. The program brings students from those sectors to employers who are saying they have a shortage of labour in those areas and see this as an opportunity for them.

We do this by offering incentives to employers. There are financial incentives, but we also show them the benefit of hiring young people in their organizations. In fact, employers tell us time and time again that they love this program because it gives them an opportunity to introduce a young person to their sector and see if they have that aptitude for their particular sector. It's also an opportunity for students to see if this is really the sector they want to work in, so it is an opportunity for both the student and the employer to assess whether or not this will be a good match, and as their skills develop with that employer, they're able to utilize the skills in other work experiences.

• (1700)

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Thank you.

There is apprehension in the minds of business people that when new students come to the job, they don't fully deliver. Rather, they need more attention and spoil the job. What is the government doing on that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Well, I think there has always been a stigma against youth, right? We've always heard those kinds of statements about young people, but what I can tell you is that employers who have been thoughtful about including young people in their workplaces are reaping the benefits.

In fact, young people are bringing in that spirit of innovation and that new way of doing things. I think our challenge as older folks is to understand that things don't remain static, and that as the workplace and technology evolve, we need to evolve with them and be thinking about how we meaningfully include the next generation of workers.

Having said that, I think there is an opportunity, when we work closely with post-secondary institutions, employers, and young people, to work on some of those soft skills that are universal and ageless. These are the skills about basic human decency: treating each other kindly, knowing what to do when you don't get along in the workplace, answering a phone professionally, and knowing the importance of showing up on time. Those are things that some people gain throughout their life experience but others struggle with. I would say that what employers are saying is that student work placement program experiential learning gives them that opportunity to teach young people how to manage through some of those things.

As a parent of two young people myself, I can tell you that those are critical lessons. When my older son comes home and talks about the struggles he's having with his colleagues, those are real struggles. We all have those struggles, especially as we are learning how to fit into a workplace, but what employers tell us is that when they have an opportunity to work with a young person in the form of a student work placement, they can help that young person work through those challenges in a safe and supported way.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

MP Warawa is next, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your being here. You've acknowledged the importance of all parties working together. Pulling in the same direction, we're much more successful.

The fact is that this was part of your mandate letter: to work in "collaboration with your colleagues" and to have "meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament" and also with "Parliamentary Committees", so thank you for being here. You were also encouraged to set the bar higher for "openness and transparency".

As the members of the official opposition, we support the government on issues with which we agree, and on other issues we hold the government to account when we feel the government is not heading in the right direction.

We agree that it's important that we train our youth, the next generation of leaders, to help them prepare for moving from schooling into the workforce. One thing on which I would disagree with you is older workers. I think you define them as 28 years of age. Older workers are not 28 years old; they're more like 50 years and up. They're older workers like me. I'm 67 and still going strong.

Minister, the previous government really put an importance on the trades and a growing country. The trade apprenticeship program was expanded greatly and has been very good at making sure our youth are trained in the red seal program if they have an interest in this field of work. It has opened up opportunities for the different genders, and we're quite excited about that.

You've said, Minister, that when we invest in Canadians, it's good. I'll just pass on a side note here, which is that the ice rink in front of the Prime Minister's office, the \$5.6-million ice rink that will be open for a few weeks, is not a good use of taxpayers' money. Think of all the jobs and job opportunities for our youth if that \$5.6 million were to be spent on helping youth.

The other point is that small business is the largest job creator in Canada, and I think the government is heading in the wrong direction in attacking our small businesses through increased taxation. A tax rate of 73% does not encourage growth in business or help youth to get jobs. It actually stifles that.

Minister, I also noticed in your mandate letter that in addition to working with committees and opposition parties and members, you're to work with the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Status of Women—you've been promoted from that—the Minister of Families and Children, the Minister of Science, and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, but there is no minister for seniors. I would suggest—

● (1705)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, on relevance, we have the minister here to talk about experiential learning. I'm not clear as to why we're introducing all these other mandate letters. It's a matter of relevance.

The Chair: Thank you.

I try to give as much latitude as possible with the questions, as you guys know, but I will ask Mr. Warawa. I've stopped his time. He still has two minutes and 33 seconds.

If you could, please get to something that's topical for the discussion today.

Mr. Mark Warawa: You can start the timer. Thank you.

I think this will all make sense in a moment.

If we're all pulling in the same direction, Minister, we will be able to accomplish much more than if we're in a rowboat and all rowing in different directions. The encouragement in the mandate letter is to work constructively.

It's my passion and my responsibility to represent Canadian seniors. There is an incredible job opportunity. You highlighted the changing workplace. Right now, we have a tremendous number of new job opportunities for our youth in geriatrics, palliative care, and

home care. I've sensed in this committee to this point that there has not been an interest in seniors' issues. With you being here, Minister, I'm hoping that may change, because that's part of your mandate: to make sure we are working together constructively.

We've heard from witnesses that there are job opportunities for youth in taking care of our aging population. There are tremendous job opportunities there, and also for small business.

Minister, I'm going to move a motion while you're here. Hopefully the committee will support this motion:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities dedicate one additional meeting during the study of experiential learning for younger Canadians, on job opportunities in home care, geriatrics, and palliative care.

I'm moving that motion.

I hope the committee can deal with this quickly, hopefully within this meeting, and not move into an in camera meeting, because the minister's mandate is for openness and transparency. If there's a motion to adjourn debate or move in camera, then it's not the open, transparent responsibility of the minister.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Ruimy.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: We have the minister here, so I move that we adjourn debate and focus on our minister.

The Chair: Okay—

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'd like a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: All those in favour of adjourning the debate on this motion?

Mr. Mark Warawa: A recorded vote is individual—

The Chair: Yes, I understand. Thank you.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 3)

The Chair: Thank you. The debate has been adjourned.

You do not have any time left, sir.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Actually, I do, sir. I had 20 seconds.

The Chair: I see the clock as being long past that. I'm moving on.

Hon. Steven Blaney: There was a point of order.

Mr. Mark Warawa: There was a point of order, Chair. It was a point of order that was moved by—

The Chair: It's been adjourned. The motion has been adjourned.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The motion has been adjourned, but I still have the—

The Chair: I'm sorry: debate was adjourned on the motion. We're moving on.

•(1710)

Mr. Mark Warawa: I'm back to my point of order.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: The standing orders, Chair, give each of us six minutes in the first round—

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mr. Mark Warawa: —and in the second round, it's six minutes for the first, second, and third questioners. Then it goes to five minutes. The clock I use here is a stopwatch; it is on an iPhone, and it's quite accurate, Chair. I had six minutes and—

The Chair: Fair enough. As per the clock I use, which is right here and managed by the clerk, there was no time left, so I am moving on.

I'm recognizing Mr. Morrissey for six minutes. We have very limited time—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'd like to answer the question, Mr. Chair, if I may.

The Chair: If you wish... actually, sorry; I have ruled that the minister is out of time.

If you wish to answer it after Mr. Morrissey has some time, that would be the protocol.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Chair.

It is regrettable that when we have the minister here and we want to speak about a very pressing issue in this country, which is youth unemployment and access for disadvantaged youth, we spend this time on a debate.

Minister, I want to go back to my earlier question on disadvantaged youth. You were alluding to that. Could you expand on the four key areas that you're going to focus on going forward, which I agree must be focused on, especially capturing those youth who, for lack of a better term, slip through the cracks, and on how our government is going to focus on that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much.

I will respond to the former member's comment.

First of all, I understand that you just concluded a seniors study. Hopefully some of the answers to your questions are in the seniors study.

Second, I think it was a little bit ironic to hear the member talk about the efforts that his previous Conservative government made to increase women in the trades when he also concurrently talked about my role as Minister of Employment being a raise, essentially a promotion, from Minister of Status of Women Canada. In fact, it's incredibly sexist that the member would mention this as a promotion, because in fact gender equality requires a full-time gig. If you are going to make any efforts in terms of moving forward on gender equality, you have to understand that. The Minister of Status of Women isn't a junior role. It isn't a role that you play to pretend that you're focused on gender equality, which is what I suspect happened for the last 10 years, which is why we don't see women in skilled

trades and we don't see women in non-traditional sectors, because we did not see a government that focused on the true equality of women. I can tell you that for all of the member's comments about their efforts in the trades, we have 110,000 unfilled skilled trades positions in this country. It's a crying shame. We can't build the things we want to build or fix the things we want to fix or build the new technology that we want build with Canadian workers because we can't find those people.

I'm sorry that I took up some time from your answer to respond to the previous member, but in fact I think it's very important that this be on the record. Our government is the first government truly focused on gender equality, and the Minister of Status of Women, as a full minister, has an incredibly important role—

Hon. Steven Blaney: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: —to ensure that women have a rightful place in Canadian society.

Now moving on, to respond to the member, you're absolutely right

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, I'd like to raise a point of order, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me. Sorry.

Go ahead on a point of order, Mr. Blaney.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, our meeting is about experiential learning for youth. I would invite the minister to answer the questions that are put to her and to respect the topic we are studying.

Also, I would like to point out that there has not been any debate on the motion, Mr. Chair. We could have settled that and had an additional meeting to discuss it. If the members of the committee are really here to help young people, that is what we should do. We could have added a meeting to focus on the fastest-growing segment of the population.

So, let's stay on topic.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: I believe I was hearing the minister do just that, so I will go back to the minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'm happy to get back to the study at hand, which is experiential learning.

Absolutely, you're right. We know that first of all we have to ensure that we help young people transition from school or training to work, and apprenticeship is one of the ways. We know that we have to make sure young people are developing skills that are relevant to the workplaces of today, that we make sure employers have the talent they need and can move forward in finding that talent, and, of course, that we have better participation of employers.

Part of the challenge is that government simply can't do everything. Employers have to invest in their own labour needs. I've been speaking with sectors across the country. Largely I'm hearing agreement. I'm hearing that people understand that they need to develop the workforce of today and tomorrow with government, and we are more than happy to be a strong partner in that work. We're looking forward to the creative ideas of the labour movement and of employers to make sure that every young Canadian in this country has a fair shot at success.

• (1715)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Cuzner.

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

On experiential learning, as with the experience here today, I'm very much learning.

If we could get something straight, guys, let's not throw history out of this. To bring the questions about the rink, the real rink, to the minister today when she's here in front of us—

Hon. Steven Blaney: That's \$5.4 million.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Exactly. The real rink was conceived under your current leader when he was Speaker of the House and wanted to bring the NHL game down and bring the rink to the.... We have to think that.

The real rink wasn't a fake lake that was \$2 million. I don't know where the fake lake is now.

We're experiencing this, but you did make a good point—

The Chair: Perhaps we could bring it back to youth employment—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: —and that was about what you did under trades. You did a good job under trades.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Cuzner; go ahead, sir.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On a point of order, Chair, there has to be relevance and there has to be fairness. In one call they're saying we should be dealing with youth employment. I tried to bring it all back to youth employment—

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: That's what I'm doing now.

Mr. Mark Warawa: —and now we're talking about the rink and pointing fingers.

The government needs to take responsibility. It's been the government for over two years now, and it needs to take responsibility for the bad decisions and take credit for the good ones. Unfortunately, there have been more bad than good.

The Chair: Thank you.

Fair enough; I will point that he was responding to a comment made by a member on your side, but I will give it back to Mr. Cuzner. He has a minute and 20 seconds.

Please get back to the study.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Thanks very much.

Of all the many bad things that were done under the last government, there was one good thing. Jason Kenney did a good job

with the job bank. It wasn't perfect, but there was some good stuff in it. Organized labour embraced that. The tradespeople embraced it. I'd like you to talk a little bit about your investment with trades, the commitment you made and the commitment you followed through on to work with trades, at least to provide other opportunities for training in this country.

It was one of the rare things they got right, so let's give them some credit here today.

The Chair: You have about 45 seconds, please.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Right. I think this is an opportunity to talk about the union-based training program.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Yes.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The call for proposals has just concluded. We're very excited about this program. This is extending our partnership with the skilled trades and also with the organized labour movement.

Look, the previous government made an extraordinary effort to decimate, I would say, the organized labour movement. We know that in fact organized labour and unions are a critical component to a strong and healthy middle class. That's why we introduced Bill C-4 and we finally passed it. I can tell you that unions are thrilled. They are so happy to see a strong government, a Liberal government, as a partner in ensuring a strong labour movement.

That's why we moved forward with union-based training. It's another way we can demonstrate to unions that we believe that the work they do is critical to Canadians, not just in the things they build and the work they do on behalf of all Canadians but also in ensuring that next generation of talent. We look forward to making announcements in the months to come about how we'll be supporting unions with both equipment and recruitment to ensure that every Canadian, regardless of their gender, their cultural background, their physical ability, or their place of birth, will have an opportunity to participate in the skilled trades.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I see that we have actually surpassed the time you committed to being here today. I do apologize. Thank you for appearing here today.

We're at the end of questions. We have some committee business to do, which we will get to in just a moment.

Madame Sansoucy, you have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: No, Mr. Chair. In fact, I have other questions I would have liked the minister to answer for the benefit of the study we are undertaking, and I would like to know whether it is possible to send questions through the clerk to the minister's office and to receive written replies. I would like to obtain some answers to the questions I have not been able to ask.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's not a bad idea.

Do we agree to this?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. Let's do that through the clerk.

Go ahead, Mr. Ruimy.

• (1720)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Just to clarify, I know we ran out of time for our NDP colleague, but that's only for her to be able to submit that. We're not opening it up to a whole bunch of folks...?

The Chair: I think we can open it up. I'm sure we have a number of questions on our side as well that we'd like to get responses to.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Okay.

Hon. Steven Blaney: It's being open and transparent.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, my officials will be here in the next couple of days as well.

The Chair: That's true too.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: You can ask any questions to the officials. There are multiple opportunities.

The Chair: That's a good point. Thank you very much, Minister.

I do have one piece of business that I want to get to before we wrap up. On Thursday I'll be presenting the travel budget to the SBLI subcommittee. As you know, I always want to be efficient with our time and with the energy of not just the members around this table but also the staff teams who do a lot of the work.

I don't want to move forward if we do not have unanimous support for the travel. I'd like to put that question to this group today. Do we have unanimous support for me to go to SBLI to advocate for this travel budget?

Go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, which travel are you referring to?

The Chair: I mean the only travel that we have been awarded. Under "committee business", it was agreed that in relation to a study on accessibility and disabled Canadians, the proposed budget in the amount of \$117,947 for the committee's travel to a number of different cities be adopted.

Mr. Mark Warawa: On which topic is that?

The Chair: You, I'm certain, are aware of this, but I will repeat it again. It's for the study on accessibility and disabled Canadians.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, to speak to that, we have to be very careful how we spend taxpayers' dollars. There is to be what has been referred to as a bit of a boondoggle out in front of the Prime Minister's office, a skating rink. That's not a good use of dollars, and travelling is not necessary, so you will not have unanimous consent.

The Chair: Okay.

Go ahead, Mr. Ruimy.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: I just feel compelled to say this before we go to the vote. If the official opposition wants to hold our disabled and our vulnerable hostage, I find that to be a shame. I don't understand why we would hold our vulnerable hostage when we could be doing good work and when we agreed in the beginning to do this.

The Chair: Just for the record, I'm not asking for a vote; I'm asking if there is unanimous consent. I've already been told that's not the case, so that's it.

Moving forward, go ahead, Mr. Warawa.

Mr. Mark Warawa: To respond to Mr. Ruimy, I think everybody—I would trust that everybody—supports looking at ways to help people who have a disability that creates accessibility problems. I think it's good that we look at that. Actually having to travel and spend taxpayers' dollars, over \$100,000, is not good use of those tax dollars. We can do the study by seeing pictures and having expert witnesses come in and by having video conference testimony, and we will save taxpayers' dollars.

The goal of the official opposition is to make sure the government is spending their tax dollars—not their tax dollars, but hard-working Canadians' tax dollars—wisely, and we don't believe the government is spending the dollars wisely. We can do the job without spending money foolishly.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Blaney.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, I simply want to remind you that we had the opportunity of discussing this issue. We have some reservations with regard to this trip for the following reasons. First, as you indicated, the request comes squarely from the government. Second, the relevance of this trip is not obvious to us. Third, there are costs associated with this trip. Those are the reasons why I must inform you that you will not have the support of the Conservative Party, neither here nor in the House.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Rodger is next, and then Adam.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: On this same point of order, I think it might be worthwhile if the clerk.... Obviously, as a government, we also are committed to not wasting taxpayers' dollars.

A similar study was undertaken in the last Parliament. It would be interesting to go back and see what the travel budget was under the Conservatives, as to where they travelled. I don't think you have to travel with the entire committee. I think you can keep costs down, but I think it's an absolute insult and disrespectful to the people who are out there trying right across this country to provide services for persons with disabilities.

It is imperative for you as new members of Parliament to get out and see this country and understand what's going on in the different regions of this world. There is no cookie-cutter approach to any kind of program in this country, and it's imperative that you get out and see the reality on the ground.

Our party's certainly committed to it. We believe that you can keep the costs down, but I think it would be worthwhile for the committee if you sort of scratched out to see what the travel budget was and where they went.

The Chair: I have Adam, Ramesh, Mark, and Alice.

Go ahead.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Accessibility to the parliamentary process is one of the most fundamental rights of a citizen of this country, and there is no group that is more disadvantaged or faces more barriers and more obstruction than people with disabilities and their advocates, which they themselves often are. People with lived experience are a critical part of the way in which evidence is produced and experience is understood, and policy needs to be developed and needs to change.

I think a parliamentary committee studying the issue of disability that makes the barriers and the obstructions so much more of a challenge to allowing those voices to be present around the table and to provide evidence and experience is creating, quite literally, a barrier to democracy and a barrier to people's civil rights and liberties being pursued. In particular because one of the people who has spoken about this is a strong advocate for seniors, who often face even more challenges with disabilities because of age and because of barriers, I would strongly and hopefully urge the opposition—in this case, the Conservative members—to reconsider the advantages that would be gained, the experiences that would be seen, and the voices that would be heard by reaching out and moving towards people with disabilities, as opposed to making them march to Ottawa.

I will be very frank with you. The disability community is watching this very closely and understands exactly who puts barriers to participating in their way.

The Chair: Ramesh is next, and then Mark.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: I am good there, because it's our duty. We have to see that we are looking after other people. It's not only that we are going to the other places that we should go to. If you want to save money, just go down Rideau Street, pass a few streets, and you will find accessible people there; you can go and do the study in only one place. That's not enough. We need to go to the whole of Canada. We have to see what everyone wants for those who are accessible persons. Those who are interested will know it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mark.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Chair, if there were a study on seniors and all the issues related to seniors, including accessibility, then I think this would be very worthwhile travel, but what we've heard from Mr.

Cuzner is that this has already been done in the last Parliament. That's what Canadians object to: it appears like there are junkets. We already spent money on travel in the last Parliament, and what information was gleaned in that last Parliament?

Instead of keeping on studying and studying and studying, do something. That's what Canadians expect.

I will reflect on the report from the commissioner of the environment. The commissioner said, referring to the Liberal government at the time:

...bold announcements are made and then often forgotten as soon as the confetti hits the ground. The federal government seems to have trouble crossing the finish line.

It's time to do something, not to make more bold announcements with more confetti in the air. If we already have this information and if we've already travelled, then let's do something. If there is going to be a study on seniors dealing with home care and along with that on how we can get our youth jobs in that field, then I think I would support it, but just with a very narrow focus.

I believe the government has an announcement they want to make, so they want us to travel, and then there is going to be an announcement about how they've listened, so here are some funds that everybody is going to get. They're going to make this announcement that in 2021 to 2050, they're going to provide billions of dollars.

Let's be real. Let's do it now. Let's do it in this Parliament. Let's not keep moving the goalposts. If we've already done the travel, let's find out what we learned in that travel instead of wasting more money.

● (1730)

The Chair: Before we continue, I have three more on the list. I have Alice, Dan, and Rodger, and it is 5:30 and I need to ask for consent to continue.

Mr. Mark Warawa: No.

The Chair: That's that.

Thank you very much, everybody. As always, thank you to everybody who appeared.

The meeting is adjourned.

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