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Chair

Mr. James Rajotte

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

This is the 92nd meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to Standing Order 83.1, we are continuing our pre-budget consultations for 2012.

Colleagues, we have two panels before us this afternoon and early evening. In our first panel, we have six organizations presenting. We have, first of all, the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO; the Canadian Bureau for International Education; the Canadian Psychological Association; the Council of Ontario Universities; the Grain Growers of Canada; and Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Welcome to all of you. Thank you for being with us here this afternoon.

You each have five minutes maximum for an opening statement.

We'll start with Mr. Smillie, and we'll work our way down the panel here.

Please begin.

Mr. Christopher Smillie (Senior Advisor, Government Relations and Public Affairs, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO): Thank you.

Greetings, Chair, members of the committee, and fellow witnesses.

I hope to give you a tip-of-the-spear view today of where we see the world and how Budget 2013 can hopefully solidify Canada's economic recovery and set us on the right path for the future.

We are the Canadian building trades. We represent skilled tradespeople who go to work every day on Canada's infrastructure, energy, mega, and even small construction projects.

The construction industry represents just under 12% of GDP. We represent about 550,000 workers—all voluntary members, by the way—and we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

What helped us survive the recession? The same two things that will help Canada grow and solidify gains in 2013 and beyond: infrastructure and the energy sector. We need a budget in 2013 that makes a significant overhaul of labour market initiatives and skills policy to ensure investment in our country isn't foregone because

Canada can't build it. If we're serious about energy superpower status, we need to get the people thing right. If we don't, other jurisdictions will.

What are these labour market and skills policy fixes we need to get right? First of all, labour market development agreements with provincial jurisdictions should prescribe and measure training goals for new Red Seal apprentices. Also, graduating current students into journeypersons is needed to ensure growth. A shrinking workforce and a broken training system is a recipe for disaster in the economy. Allocate existing unaccountable LMDA funding to provincial governments differently so that employers are encouraged to hire construction apprentices, either financially or through a tax incentive. We submit that no more money be spent on redundant websites or studies by provinces, the content of which already exists in the public domain.

The federal government should be interested in getting value for money already allocated for distribution to the provinces in these deals. Given that the Government of Canada is a funder of provincial education systems, there should be financial consideration given to those who have tangible results to show. Minister Oliver's common-sense plan for regulation reform in the energy sector needs to be coupled with practical labour market solutions.

There is no possibility that our economy gets built out with an underperforming labour market. I stress this is a free solution, as these labour market deals already exist. The policy leadership required is free, and we see no reason not to proceed.

Primarily, the Government of Canada needs to ensure that barriers to employment for Canadians are low. For example, there needs to be sufficient incentive for companies to hire young Canadians who otherwise would not work and contribute to society, provided that these positions lead to real jobs.

We submit that a procurement policy be in place on federal government construction sites, encouraging contractors to hire young Canadians or aboriginals registered in the Red Seal trades. Some of the energy partners we work with in Alberta require training plans to be submitted to them regularly. This requirement is part of the commercial terms between the purchaser of construction and the companies that actually do the work. It's been wildly successful in Alberta in training and retaining young people at large energy projects. Some sites, like Suncor and Shell, have 30% apprentices on site. These kinds of innovative programs would work when Public Works is buying construction; it costs nothing to implement and it serves a public policy goal. If it's sound public policy to get the best price for work, which it is, it is sound public policy to make sure that people get trained on the work paid by tax dollars.

I said it in the *Financial Post* 14 days ago, and I'll say it again: there's a pending demographic time bomb in construction. Massive retirements, coupled with relatively new entrant numbers and increasing economic demand on our industry, could cripple growth. Check out my HUMA testimony from May if you want more details on who, where, what, when, and why.

In this context, there are primarily two levers that can be pulled by the Government of Canada: the apprenticeship and training system, and immigration. The apprenticeship system is largely managed by the provincial jurisdiction, but is completely funded by the Government of Canada. StatsCan tells us that registrations are trending upwards, which is a good thing, but that graduation rates from apprenticeship curriculum in Canada is fairly low and is not on the rise. There is little or no incentive for people to progress through the curriculum.

I'm getting the one-minute hook.

The federal government has tried to assist through the implementation of the apprenticeship incentive grant. Currently, it covers only years one and two. We think it should be extended to years three and four and the benefit amount should be increased. If we take a look at some of the other things the Government of Canada spends money on—no offence to the research and development community—\$2.6 billion is allocated to SR and ED tax credits, \$89 million is spent on apprenticeship and employment tax credit issues. There's a real discrepancy there.

It's free to reallocate money from one program to another, so if we're really concerned about skills shortages, if we're really concerned about these kinds of things, we'll take a look at money we're spending and make sure we're getting value for money.

• (1535)

Just quickly, the last thing I would say is that the mobility of Canadian workers impacts productivity. If we want to improve productivity in our country, it's a really good idea to look at a system that encourages mobility for skilled trades workers from one part of the country where there is a shortage of work to places where those workers would be in demand. So let's take a look at that.

I've handed out my policy to the Minister of Finance—at Starbucks, and on his policy retreat, etc.—so he has it.

I think it's time: you could talk to our employers.

Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now hear from the Canadian Bureau for International Education, please.

Dr. Scott McAlpine (President, Douglas College, and Board Member, Canadian Bureau for International Education): Good afternoon.

I thank you for taking the time to hear from me today. I am Scott McAlpine, and I am pleased to be here on behalf of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, or CBIE, of which I am a board member. I'm also the president of Douglas College, which is a long-standing member of CBIE. Douglas has two campuses in metro Vancouver. We have over 1,000 international students currently studying at Douglas.

CBIE is Canada's national membership organization dedicated to international education. CBIE comprises 150 member institutions across Canada, covering the whole education spectrum, from K to 12 to postgraduate.

We are committed to making Canada a global leader in international education. CBIE plays a leadership role in the Canadian Consortium for International Education Marketing. This organization has unified and coordinated the sector like never before, ensuring that we are well positioned to play a leadership role, in partnership with government, in order to ensure a strong return on our investments.

CBIE provided a written online submission to this committee in August. We concluded as follows: CBIE recommends that the government provide substantial, sustained investment for a comprehensive international education strategy, delivered in partnership with key stakeholders, in order to achieve concrete results based on ambitious targets for international student enrolment and study abroad opportunities for Canadians.

The points I want to amplify today are that Canada is well positioned to take a leadership role in international education, and that this will require a substantial, sustained investment. The benefits of this investment are for our economy and for our students. Our youth are the future leaders of tomorrow.

Our recommendation was bolstered by the report of the advisory panel on Canada's international education strategy, appointed by the Honourable Jim Flaherty and the Honourable Ed Fast. CBIE supports all of the panel's recommendations that together are designed to make Canada the 21st-century leader in international education.

So what kind of leader can we be? The panel clearly integrated the messages provided by CBIE and the consortium. The panel claimed and aimed to position Canada not only to attract top talent from abroad, but also to prepare our citizens for a global society and marketplace. In other words, they aimed to position Canada to develop a labour force that can ensure our country's prosperity in the short term and into the future.

We need to invest more, however. To give this some perspective, in 2010 Canada enrolled about 5% of the world's international students, putting us in seventh position worldwide. Australia, a country of similar size, received 7% of the international student market, putting it in fourth position.

To concretize some of the benefits of international education, consider the following. In 2010 international students in Canada spent more than \$7.7 billion, all in. Education services are now Canada's 11th largest export industry and our single largest export to China. In B.C., international education is the fourth largest export industry, and is moving quickly into third. Moreover, international education is witnessing worldwide expansion. The OECD estimates that the global demand is set to grow from nearly 4.1 million students in 2010 to 7.2 million in 2025. We need, as a country, to tap into this large and expanding resource.

And what about Canadian students? Providing Canadian students with international opportunities allows them to acquire global perspectives and contribute to what Governor General David Johnston has termed "the diplomacy of knowledge".

• (1540)

The Chair: You have one minute.

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Thank you.

The Governor General is also CBIE's patron and just last week helped us launch our blog, "Without Borders". At present, only 3% of Canadian university students and 1.1% of college students participate in exchange programs. Compare this to Germany, where 33% do. Just this month, the Australian government announced \$38.5 million for 10,000 students to study abroad. In 2011, Brazil announced 100,000 scholarships for study abroad.

CBIE urges the committee to consider at minimum a ramp-up from the current investment of \$5 million per annum by the federal government to \$25 million within the next three years, with a significant amount of this total dedicated toward enhancing our current scholarship offer and to build momentum for providing international experience for Canadian students. We also urge that the government consider a council for international education and research and fund that as well.

In short, CBIE urges this committee to take forward our message and support the recommendations that will permit us to realize this potential as a global leader in international education.

I thank the committee for its time today.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll now hear from the Canadian Psychological Association.

Ms. Karen Cohen (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Psychological Association): Thank you for the invitation to present today on behalf of the Canadian Psychological Association.

CPA is the national association for the science, practice, and education of psychology in Canada. With almost 7,000 members and affiliates, we are Canada's largest national association of psychologists. Psychologists engage in research, practice, and education in human behaviour, the very foundation of successful societies and economies.

In terms of practice, psychologists are the largest regulated specialized mental health care providers in the country, outnumbering psychiatrists by about four to one. We help people recover from common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. We help them manage chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease; these are often associated with mental health factors.

When it comes to mental disorders, psychological treatments are among the most effective. The mental health needs of Canadians and the toll these take on individuals, families, the workplace, and the economy are substantial. In any given year, one in five people live with a mental health problem, with estimated costs to the economy of \$51 billion. Mental health problems and disorders account for nearly 30% of short- and long-term disability claims. This means that, as a large employer, the Government of Canada feels the impact of mental health on the workforce very directly.

According to recent media reports, on a given day, 19,000 public servants are on sick leave. In 2011, more than 47% of new disability claims were for mental health conditions, led by depression and anxiety. Despite the mental health needs of Canadians and despite the fact that we have psychological treatments that work, the services of psychologists are not funded by public health insurance plans. This makes them inaccessible to many Canadians with modest incomes or no insurance.

Although there are some publicly funded services in Canada, these are in short supply, and wait lists are long. When people have access to extended health benefits through employment, caps on these benefits are often too low to afford meaningful treatment.

The United Kingdom, Australia, and Norway have mental health initiatives at the federal level that include covering the services of psychologists through the public health system.

Canada's federal government has a crucial role to play when it comes to funding health care, participating in innovation, and collaborating with the provinces and territories. The federal government is the fifth largest provider of health care in the country. It can lead by example by improving its capacity to deliver effective services in areas for which it has direct responsibility. Further, as a large employer itself, the government can do much to innovate when it comes to psychological health in the workplace and to provide meaningful coverage for care when needed.

The recruitment and retention of psychologists to work in federal departments is a pressing issue. The need for mental health services in the military is acute. In some cases, soldiers wait months before a psychologist is available to them. Access to psychological services within the Correctional Service of Canada is inadequate, yet research shows that psychological interventions address mental health issues and reduce recidivism in this population, the latter important to individual and public protection.

Finally, the federal government funds research. We need to ensure that there's sufficient core funding for the granting agencies to support inquiry into the psychological factors central to Canadians' health and wellness, factors that can inform and guide public policy.

Our pre-budget submission includes a number of workable solutions. I will highlight six of them now.

First, set up an innovation fund to assist provinces and territories in developing a sustainable mental health infrastructure that will improve access to evidence-based psychological services.

Second, create federal residency placements for psychologists within federal departments that provide health services. Psychologists often stay to work where they do their residency training, yet in many provinces there is greater demand for positions than supply.

Third, many rural and remote communities in Canada are lacking the psychological care they need. Physicians and nurses now receive Canada student loan forgiveness under the CanLearn program. We recommend expanding the program to include new psychologists.

Fourth, revisit the extended health care insurance plans for federal public employees. Make sure that coverage provided for psychological services affords the employee meaningful levels of service.

Fifth, remove the requirement that employees of the federal public service must get a referral from a medical doctor before qualifying for reimbursement for psychological services. Psychologists can diagnose and treat psychological disorders. Other insurance plans do not have this gatekeeper requirement, one that creates unnecessary delays in getting treatment to people who need it from those trained to deliver it.

Finally, ensure core research funding for granting councils and funding for students that recognizes the role of psychological factors in research, particularly in health and the neurosciences.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now hear from the Council of Ontario Universities.

Dr. Steven Liss (Vice-Principal of Research, Queen's University, Council of Ontario Universities): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Steven Liss, and I am the vice-principal of research at Queen's University. On behalf of the Council of Ontario Universities, I would like to thank you for providing us with the opportunity to appear before you today.

COU is the voice of Ontario's 21 universities. Our campuses are home to nearly 450,000 students, or 40% of all students across Canada. Our institutions are unified by a shared commitment to student success, research excellence, and community engagement. We believe strongly in the power of education and research and its ability to transform individuals, communities, and our country.

I am here to speak about issues that I know are important to you and all Canadians: productivity, job creation, economic recovery, and demographic change. Most specifically, I am here to talk to you about the key role that Ontario universities play in helping you to address these issues.

Productivity is directly linked to our ability to be forward thinking, innovative, and nimble. This means that our graduates must bring well-developed skills and knowledge with them into the workplace. It also means that in a world of rapid changes, our students must graduate not only armed with the skills required for today's marketplace, but also with the ability to evolve their skills to meet the needs of the marketplace of tomorrow.

Ontario university faculty and staff excel at ensuring our graduates are equipped with the foundational skills and experience they require as they transition to the labour force. They also challenge and teach our students to find new ways of looking at old problems, to critically assess and interpret information, and to change their minds and their ways of doing things in light of new knowledge. The tools of their trade are knowledge transmission and self-directed learning acquired through classroom education, as well as hands on experiences in labs, libraries, workplaces, and within communities.

Canada's three granting agencies, NSERC, SSHRC, and CIHR, as well as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, provide critical funding to support the training opportunities and experiences our students need to remain flexible and innovative throughout their careers. These investments also allow faculty, students, and staff to develop industry partnerships that catalyze direct economic benefits to Canadians.

Ontario universities encourage the federal government to continue to enhance investments in its core research programs through the federal granting agencies, CFI, and indirect costs of research, with a particular emphasis on student training through graduate and post-doctoral awards and scholarships.

Job creation is about leveraging the talents and skills of Canadians to both sustain and grow the Canadian marketplace. Data analytics is an area of strong competitive advantage for Canada. Canadians are among the best in the world at interpreting and manipulating data, and we are global leaders in data visualization, modelling, and story development.

In his recent speech to the World Economic Forum, Prime Minister Harper spoke of the government's commitment to technology. He stated that the government is "just beginning to comprehensively modernize our approach to research and innovation policy in order to get better commercial results for the significant government investments we make in scientific and technological development".

Data, and our ability to use it, will be the global currency of the future. In order to leverage our existing talents and ensure that Canadians enjoy the economic benefits of this emerging market, investment in and the development of a national framework for data infrastructure is required. Ontario universities encourage the federal government to build on this existing investment in data infrastructure and to consider the creation of a data infrastructure program as part of its commitment to ensuring Canadian research is modern, relevant, and responsive, as well as being globally connected and globally competitive.

Strong economic recovery requires a strong, talented, and diverse workforce. Canadians are our greatest national natural resource. But our demographic make-up has changed and our society is aging. Our ability to combat the effects of our shrinking workforce will be built on our capacity to be more nimble, innovative, and productive than our competitors. It will also require us to strengthen our ability to attract and retain new Canadians and create new and strategic partnerships with others elsewhere in the world.

While we continue to emphasize the value of brain gain, we are in an era of brain circulation. Ontario universities are key partners in all of these activities.

To help deal with skills and labour shortages that are anticipated in Canada's future, we encourage the federal government to make international education and research a pillar of the Government of Canada's foreign policy and economic growth objectives.

● (1550)

The Chair: One minute.

Dr. Steven Liss: As part of this commitment, we ask the federal government to continue its critical investments in programs, such as the Canada research chairs and the Vanier Canada graduate scholarships, and to provide nimble and flexible resources so that Canadian researchers can pursue a first-mover advantage in global research partnerships.

As a final comment today, I would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring the success of aboriginal students. Ontario universities are deeply committed to this, and we encourage the

federal government to consider new areas of investment that will increase aboriginal high school completion and expand access to and success in post-secondary education and beyond for aboriginal learners.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now hear from the Grain Growers of Canada.

Mr. Richard Phillips (Executive Director, Grain Growers of Canada): Thank you very much.

My name is Richard Phillips, and I have a small farm in Saskatchewan. Grain Growers represents over 50,000 grain farmers across Canada.

Before I start, I showed up in my shirt today, and I'm reminded of Roy Atkinson. He was very active in the NDP in Saskatchewan for many years. One time he was asked why he didn't show up in a suit and he said, "You showed up in your working clothes and I showed up in mine." That'll be my excuse for why I'm wearing a shirt and not a suit today.

In the grain and oilseed sector we're very fortunate. We've had a couple of good years, with good crops and good prices overall in Canada. We're not here today looking for big money. We have seen, in western Canada, massive change with the ending of the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly. It's now time to look at the regulatory environment to see how we can be even more successful with the new opportunities available.

The Government of Canada funds research and innovation through Agriculture Canada, universities, agrimarketing programs, and science clusters, where they work with producers. Most of those programs actually work quite well. However, we always feel there's room to improve those. We encourage the government to sit down with us. In the new environment, the opportunity is there to see how we can do even better now that we've worked in these programs for a couple of years.

We'd also like to look at a number of other issues in terms of the regulatory environment that will allow us to be successful. Number one, we need to clean up the Canadian Grain Commission. We need to get regulations in place so that we can continue to export grain the way we need to.

We need a more predictable variety registration process. We have a lot of people interested in breeding wheat in Canada right now and they're prepared to bring dollars in, but our system is still archaic; it was set up for 20, 30, or 40 years ago. There's a lot of modernizing to do there.

Thirdly, there's a rail service review. We spent years and years working on cleaning up the rail service so that shippers have a better opportunity to negotiate with the railways. We understand legislation is coming soon. We ask you and encourage you to support this; don't lose faith. You'll be under a lot of pressure from the railways to back down on things. Stay with the producers. Over 90% of their shippers in Canada are united in that we have to have change: if 90% of your customers aren't happy, then maybe you're the problem.

Last is trade negotiations. I'd like to recognize all three political parties. The Liberals—Mr. Bryson is here, the former trade critic. He's very supportive of trade deals. The NDP have been signalling lately that they're much more open to looking at trade deals if they are good for Canada. The Conservatives, of course, have been very open to trade deals and to leading a lot of our negotiations.

The United States is a big market for us, but so are Morocco, the EU, the trans-Pacific partnership, India, China, and Japan. We can grow great crops—we have lots of land in Canada—we just need markets to sell them to. That's really important.

So work with us to ensure that we do the research and innovation correctly, that we leverage even more money out of the private sector, the public sector, and producers for research. And give us that business environment and market access to be successful. We, as farmers, want to make our living from the marketplace.

Thank you.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now hear from the Nature Conservancy of Canada, please.

Mr. John Lounds (President and Chief Executive Officer, Nature Conservancy of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

On behalf of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to present to you today as you consider recommendations for Budget 2013. I would also like to thank the government for the bold steps it has taken in recent budgets to enhance the conservation of lands, both public and private, including the expansion of our national park system and the investment in the natural areas conservation partnership program.

As Canada's largest non-profit, private land conservation organization, the Nature Conservancy of Canada brings a unique perspective to the budget discussion. In just nine days we will celebrate our 50th anniversary. With the help of our partners, we have conserved more than 2.6 million acres to date—habitat that supports many of our species at risk. We work in every province, with the help of more than 48,000 supporters.

In the few minutes we have, I would like to leave you with two thoughts: first, that land conservation is not a luxury, but is integral to sustained economic recovery and growth; and second, that

renewal of the natural areas conservation program will deliver on-the-ground results that benefit nature and Canadians.

Canada has led the world in its recovery from the global economic recession, but we must remain vigilant if we are to achieve a full recovery and enhance sustainable economic growth. We believe it is possible to realize the goal of sustained economic recovery and enhanced growth while conserving our natural heritage and our working landscapes. In fact, we believe the two are tied together. In real economic terms, nature provides valuable goods and services, such as cleaning our air and water, flood control, and carbon storage. Conserving these services is essential for thriving communities, robust employment, and economic growth. Land conservation directly contributes to our quality of life. Our natural heritage is one of our competitive advantages. It is woven into our Canadian identity and brand. Accessibility of our natural areas to major Canadian centres contributes to our high standard of living and makes Canada an attractive country in which to invest, live, work, and play. Conservation contributes to a healthy environment, which in turn is a foundation for a strong economy.

Budget 2013 presents an opportunity to ensure that we continue to build upon our conservation achievements for the sake of all Canadians. The natural areas conservation program is a Canadian success story, one that the Nature Conservancy of Canada has been proud to lead. Funding for this program will soon expire. It was launched in 2007 by the Government of Canada with an initial investment of \$225 million. The program is the largest commitment by any Canadian government to the conservation of natural spaces through the protection of private lands.

This unique public-private partnership invests in direct, on-the-ground action. The results speak for themselves. More than 835,000 acres—that's 3,400 square kilometres—has been conserved to date. To put it another way, that's 1,100 NHL-sized hockey rinks every day since March 2007. Natural habitat has been protected for 126 species at risk and 450 species of conservation concern.

Through matching funding, we are delivering almost three dollars of conservation for every dollar invested by the government. How have we matched the funds? It's by engaging more Canadians in the conservation mission. Our partners come from all walks of life and all corners of Canada—individuals, landowners, communities, provincial governments, other conservation organizations, first nations, and industry. They have worked with us through the program to create win-win solutions from coast to coast to coast. The program is an innovative approach that delivers measurable results and maximum value for the taxpayer dollar. I invite you to read more about it in the materials we have submitted to the committee.

We urge the committee to support renewal of the natural areas conservation program in Budget 2013. We propose a renewed investment of \$250 million over five years. That will yield an additional 3,200 square kilometres of conserved land and more than \$700 million in conservation. As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada has committed to ensuring that 17% of our lands and inland waters are protected by 2020. We believe that with innovative programs such as the natural areas conservation program, Canada can achieve this by 2017, our 150th birthday.

As the finance minister himself has said, the environment and the economy are inextricably linked. Canada can lead the way both economically and in terms of the conservation of our natural estate.

I look forward to answering questions. Thank you very much.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will begin members' questions with Ms. Nash, for five minutes, please.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Thank you.

Welcome to all of the witnesses. They were very diverse and interesting presentations. Unfortunately, we only get five minutes to ask you questions, so I'll try to fit in as much as I can.

Ms. Cohen, you raise some very bracing statistics. One in five persons in any given year is affected by mental illness, 30% are on short-term and long-term disability claims, and there is a \$51 billion impact on our economy. I know anecdotally that mental health is a huge issue in communities across Canada. It's certainly a big issue in my community. We see low-income people with mental health problems, although I know it can affect people at any income level.

A few years ago Senator Kirby released a report—I think in 2006—that made over 100 recommendations. The kinds of recommendations you're making today about increasing access to psychologists, were they part of the Kirby report, and have any of these recommendations been actioned?

Ms. Karen Cohen: Following Senator Kirby's report, when the Mental Health Commission came out with a national strategy for mental health, one of their key recommendations was that we do a better job at enhancing access to evidence-based service. Prevention and promotion, workplace mental health—these are critically important. But the reality is that when one in five persons develops a mental health problem, we need to do a better job at getting them the care they need.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Have you noticed an increase in services, or is this a work in progress?

Ms. Karen Cohen: I think it's still a work in progress. The Mental Health Commission released its strategy only in the spring or early summer. There's lots of work to be done to address it, particularly in the jurisdictions. As for figuring the solutions to that problem, we have a ways to go.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Have you done any costing of what the impact on medicare would be if psychologists were as accessible as medical doctors, without a referral and without private payment?

Ms. Karen Cohen: I'm glad you asked that question. As psychologists, we can tell you a lot about the research that shows what's effective for mental health problems. But we haven't done as great a job at telling you what it would cost to do a better job to address them. As an association, we have commissioned a business case from a group of health economists. It will be out early in the year and it will answer that question: what will a business model look like for Canada. Likely it will produce a variety of models—employer-provided, private insurer, public insurer. We want to be able to help answer that question.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Presumably, it would put a dent in that \$51 billion cost.

Ms. Karen Cohen: That would be the hope. Our position is that you pay now or you pay later.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Thank you.

Mr. Liss, in your presentation and in your brief to our committee, you talked about aboriginal communities. You said, and it's a shocking statistic, that 60% of high school students on reserve and 43% off reserve drop out and don't complete their high school education and therefore never make it to university. You've raised that as an issue. What kinds of suggestions do you have to reach back into the public school system to help those students prepare themselves for an opportunity to learn in the post-secondary system?

Dr. Steven Liss: The important driver is mentorship/leadership within the community and the universities. At Queens we have a number of examples in engineering and applied science and in our school of policy studies. We're supporting increased engagement of aboriginal students in our programs and creating a receptive environment on our campuses. This is occurring across Canada. We are trying to increase the number of students engaged in post-secondary education. We want to give them the opportunity to pursue those programs and assist them in developing mentorship and leadership capacity and reaching out. This is an important point. The universities are just beginning in many respects to address this on their own campuses in a way that is receptive, welcoming, and inclusive. We want to increase the numbers in that population and make more successes possible.

I have a graduate student who has just finished a master's degree, a member of the Mi'kmaq community. I think getting individuals like Bailey and others to go back into their community and work is important.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much, Ms. Nash.

Ms. Glover, go ahead, please.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

On that note, Mr. Liss, I'm glad you brought it up, because I know in Winnipeg, which is where I'm from, the Aboriginal Centre is doing a fantastic job. It is funded primarily by the federal government. They've actually partnered with the aerospace industry, and the aerospace industry is helping to train aboriginals in a very critical sector. We've seen some tremendous success stories.

I'm glad you mentioned the successes along with the failures. We have more work to do, but, boy oh boy, we have some really talented aboriginal people coming out of these programs, so I'm glad you recognize that.

I do want to ask Mr. Smillie some questions.

I'm a mom with a son who went away to be a carpenter. He went to Alberta. So I appreciate very much all of the hard work that your association does, because my son brags about you all the time.

That being said, when he moved, housing was an issue. I appreciate what you're saying about this mobility tax credit, but I'm interested in hearing from you what solutions there would be for housing, because when he got there he had to live with four other people in a house, which was difficult. Many people who move are living in trailers.

How can we partner with you to solve that problem? Mobility is one thing, but the other is where to stay.

Mr. Christopher Smillie: That's a great question. There are really three ways it happens in Alberta, or anywhere across the country where there's a large concentration of work. You're either in a camp, which is provided by your employer, or you get a living-out allowance from your employer. It might be anywhere between \$90 and \$125 a day.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: He didn't get any of that.

How do we partner with you to make sure that it is happening in a way that's consistent?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: We can speak to the big jobs, the industrial jobs, but the best way to do it is to make sure there isn't inflation in the regional economy, and that's hard to control.

When you have a shortage of skills—and that's the key of my presentation—the costs for everything go up. It's disproportionately expensive to live in northern Alberta. That's why some employers go ahead...and some owners, like some of the big oil companies, spend big money to put people up.

At the end of the day, it's about spreading the workforce across the country. Things happen in regional economies that are hot that really can't be controlled by the government, industry, or players, but I think if we have sort of a national approach to the workforce, we should be able to avoid those inflationary pressures in small...

• (1610)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Would your organization be willing to partner with government to make an incentive—something like the mobility tax credit—available, if on the inside the companies were also providing some incentive for housing? I could see a partnership working like that, but I'd hate to give these tax rates—

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Sure.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: That's good.

The other thing I want to bring up is that you talked an awful lot about developing skills in schools and what not, which I think is critical. Skills Canada will provide about \$8.7 million over the next three years to do those trade-focused projects.

In Manitoba, for example, I love going to the young women's conferences, where your organizations can actually help train these kids and what not. Then we also have the skills competition that happens every year, which I know many of your organizations.... We have that program, but how can we further enhance that kind of thing?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: It is all about promotion of the skilled trades as a valuable career path, full stop.

The Government of Canada can play a significant role in getting to people before they get to high school or while they're in high school or elementary school, to say that this is a valuable career path.

If there's one thing the committee can take out of this, it is that industry needs help getting to people in the education system.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Would you be supportive of us enhancing that program?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Absolutely. Skills Canada is a way to promote and get young people involved in the trades. They cover everything, from hair cutters to construction workers. There's a long list.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I've been every year. It's amazing.

Mr. Christopher Smillie: That's one way to do it, absolutely. We'd be supportive. We'd think about doing a P3 type of thing with Skills Canada and government, industry, and whoever else, absolutely.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: That's very insightful.

Do I have one minute left?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Thank you for acknowledging Minister Oliver's....

With regard to responsible development, could you just expand on that? Why do you think that was important?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: It's important to get the regulation stuff right to spur investment, but we need to make sure the labour market policy is in tune with that. We can't roll out these great steps to get our country developed without making sure that the labour market and skills policy at the federal and provincial levels are in sync.

We don't want to have all this investment and then not be able to follow through and actually build the project. That would be my 20-second answer.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Glover.

Mr. Brison, please.

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

And thank you very much to each of you for appearing before us today.

Mr. Smillie, recently I was at a conference of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and there was a session on education and training. One of the Calgary-based oil executives or CEOs said he had just as much interest in the quality of trades training in Nova Scotia or Newfoundland as he did in Alberta, because of the mobility of the workforce in Canada.

Over the weekend I was in Mr. Jean's riding of Fort McMurray, where a lot of Atlantic Canadians are living and working. One of the things I saw in that riding...when you talk to people, you learn that some of the training programs enable people after grade 10 to go to a summer job, to do some form of apprenticeship after grade 11, and then in grade 12 they graduate from high school with a skilled trade.

Given the diversity of practices around trades within Canadian provinces, do we really need a robust national trades and learning strategy in Canada—working with the provinces?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: I think we need to refocus. In the skilled trades, we have the Red Seal program, which already is a national forum, so to speak.

When the federal government is giving money to the provinces for education and training programs, they need to think about the public

policy implications of that money, or is it just a carte blanche to the provinces?

Do we need a national strategy? I think what we need is coordination from the national level to make sure the right people are lined up with the right jobs at the right time.

Hon. Scott Brison: Yes.

This is a longer discussion perhaps, but I would assert that we need more than just coordination. This is a national imperative, and there's no constitutional barrier to preventing leadership on this file from the national level.

On the issue of international students, both in terms of Canadian students studying abroad and foreign students studying here, for a long time Australia was attracting more students from China, but I believe last year Australia started attracting more students from Mexico than Canada. Is it a question of resources, or is the Australian government just more focused on this in terms of the amount of investment they're making? Would it be a good idea to develop some sort of national or internationally recognized scholarship program aimed at attracting the best and brightest to Canada, something with a branding capacity of, say, a Fulbright or a Rhodes scholarship?

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Absolutely.

To the Australian question first, Australia is investing quite heavily in the branding of Australia as an education destination of choice. The advisory panel on international education in Canada advised that if we did a similar thing, we could double the number of international students by 2022 from 239,000 to roughly 450,000.

On the Fulbright scholarship idea, again, the recommendation we make is for a doubling of the number of scholarships for study abroad opportunities, as well as studying in Canada. We want to see 50,000 Canadians having the opportunity to study abroad, and certainly the same number having scholarships to study in Canada.

• (1615)

Hon. Scott Brison: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lounds, congratulations on the work the Nature Conservancy of Canada is doing. I support what you're calling for, in terms of continuing the NACP.

Have you looked at issues around land banking and agriculture and sensitive agricultural land? We're seeing more of that, for instance, in the Annapolis Valley, in Nova Scotia, with the pressures of development.

The Chair: Could we have a brief response, please?

Mr. John Lounds: Okay.

No, we haven't been looking at that. That's not something our group has particular expertise in. We focus on the biodiversity conservation question. Many more regional land trusts have been established that are looking at agricultural land conservation.

Hon. Scott Brison: So NACP would not apply to—

Mr. John Lounds: No, not to this point in time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brison.

We'll go to Mr. Preston, please.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Rajotte. It's great to be here today.

I'm going to go back to the Nature Conservancy too and maybe help with some of the answers Mr. Brison was looking for.

Again, thank you for your opening statement, and thank you for the work you do. You do a great job protecting some of the ecologically sensitive lands in Canada. More so, thank you for page 3 in your brochure. It's fantastic. We'll let others look that one up.

I understand the Nature Conservancy partners with land trusts for the most part in order to acquire land from land owners. Those land trusts leverage matching federal funds in order to be able to do that. The Canadian Land Trust Alliance is asking for a change in the carry forward provision—an increase to 10 years from 5 years on the carry forward provision for that.

First of all, how important is the carry forward provision for land trusts in order to be able to acquire this type of land?

Mr. John Lounds: You're speaking about the carry forward in terms of how long you can utilize an ecogift for your individual tax?

We haven't found it to be necessarily a major problem. It would be helpful if you were able to do that, obviously, because a lot of the folks we run into often—land rich, cash poor—more often than not can benefit from some more innovative ways of looking at how we treat their particular tax situation. What we're able to bring to the table is kind of like a P3 conservation. That's what we're doing. We're just trying to figure out the proper investment of public dollars versus private dollars versus what the land owners themselves may contribute to the equation.

Mr. Joe Preston: You bring forward that P3 piece, but you leverage the federal dollars in all of these things with private dollars and land trust dollars coming forward to help that. How important is it to encourage the awareness of a credit like that in order to generate, as you mentioned, the land rich, cash poor kind of situation?

Mr. John Lounds: Both the dollars and the credits available are very important to why people participate in a program like this. If you think about land and land conservation, really there are private benefits that are being received from the land. There are also public benefits that are being received from the land. That's why we believe at the Nature Conservancy that we have to figure out how we can all work on it.

•(1620)

Mr. Joe Preston: Any idea what the cost difference would be between a 5-year and a 10-year...?

Mr. John Lounds: I haven't looked at it. Sorry.

Mr. Joe Preston: In your submission, it says you're proud of your history of leveraging private sector investment to protect Canada's natural spaces and to promote conservation. We already talked about how much federal dollars are truly leveraged in doing that.

You're really good at this. You're actually quite good from the land trust point of view—

Mr. John Lounds: Thank you.

Mr. Joe Preston: —in convincing the private sector to get involved in setting aside ecologically sensitive lands. Your group helps organize that. You're quite successful at doing it.

Do you have any thoughts for some of the other sectors on how they could also be doing some of this leveraging? Mr. Smillie mentioned the leveraging of private-public partnerships. You're really quite good at it as an organization, convincing people to do it.

Mr. John Lounds: Part of it is not just convincing people to do it. What we have found is that if you scratch people just a little bit... you'll find there are a lot of people who are actually quite keen about conservation underneath all the other things they do. What we've been finding over the past decade or so is that there are more and more folks who have become interested in not only saying that they're interested in conservation, but actually putting their money where their mouth is. Having ways to incent them to do that has basically changed how we're able to make that happen.

I'm not an expert on that, but it may be something to look at in terms of how other sectors may be able to drive forward what I'd consider to be good public policy.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Preston.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caron, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for joining us today. My questions are mostly for Mr. Phillips.

Mr. Phillips, in most areas of agriculture—including, I assume, the grain sector—family farms are competing with large integrators. Could you tell me what the current situation is for Canadian family grain farms, or what may fit in that definition?

[English]

Mr. Richard Phillips: I believe that over 90% of all farms in Canada are still controlled by families, like my family and my father's family. I think only 5% or 10% would be considered corporate-controlled. When people say corporate farms, sometimes they.... My farm is not large, but it's still a corporation, just because it's easier to give my wife and each of my four sons some shares.

So just because farms are corporate, it doesn't mean they're what some people would call corporate farms.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

I think the distinction is significant because small farms often have to incorporate themselves. However, I would like to know whether large integrators are currently a threat to family farms in the grain industry.

[English]

Mr. Richard Phillips: I don't think so. Farms are getting larger in western Canada. Part of that is just the technology and the machinery we have available. One farmer on a tractor today can farm far more acreage than they used to. I think part of it is just a natural evolution.

When I look around my hometown, there are fewer farmers, but the people who are there are actually better farmers in many ways. I went through university, but the young people coming after me today are smarter, faster, and brighter than I was at that age.

So I think some of it is just a natural progression. They're capable of farming more land.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

You mentioned that Canadian farmers are aging. Eventually, the transfer issue will come into play. There are difficulties and obstacles involved in transferring family-owned farms in a number of agricultural sectors. The same is probably true of grain farms. Could you identify those obstacles for us? Do you have any solutions or suggestions for overcoming them?

[English]

Mr. Richard Phillips: The best way to get young people to want to farm is to make a lot of money. Right now, I'll be frank, we are seeing a lot of young people wanting to come back and take over the family farm because it's profitable.

Something you might want to consider is the capital gains exemption. If a farmer retires from farming he gets...is it half a million or three-quarters of a million? I can't remember. There's a number in there. If my father sells his farm, he can save some tax-free...but it's not actually tied to selling it to your own family.

You may want to look at whether to have an additional exemption if you sold your farm, so that you can transfer your assets to your children without having to pay a lot of income tax. In theory, then you could transfer it at a lower value to give them a better start. Something like that I think would be very worthwhile looking at.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: The previous Bill C-38 included a provision—which was adopted—intended to privatize the seed inspection process. A number of farmers in my riding are worried because this could compromise the credibility of inspection in the eyes of our partners, countries to which we export and our international buyers. Have you heard about that? Is that a concern for your organization?

[English]

Mr. Richard Phillips: Actually, I've been a seed grower for over 20 years, and my father and my grandfather were seed growers as well. We were initially concerned about that. I think we've communicated very clearly, though, to the government and the people responsible that if you're not going to do it, you have to watch whoever we license to do it, to make sure they are well-qualified to do the job. As long as the people are qualified and they follow up and spot-check them, then I think we'll be okay. But it's really critical that good people are put into the positions. Otherwise we'd be better off leaving it with the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you.

I have 30 seconds left. Do you think that this is only a confirmation for the time being, and that it's too early to see how the process is going and to determine whether the initiative has been successful?

[English]

Mr. Richard Phillips: That's correct. I think it comes into effect next year.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Caron.

[English]

Mr. Jean, please.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witnesses who attend this day.

Mr. McAlpine, I'm interested. I was an international student. I went to Portland, Oregon, and did a science degree and I went to Australia and did a law degree as well as an MBA. I have to tell you what attracted me to Australia was the sun, not necessarily the great education. However, I didn't get to see much of it; I did spend a lot of time indoors in classrooms.

I'm curious. I know Australia has a huge program for international students. In fact, Bond University, where I attended at the time, back in the late 1980s, early 1990s, was 40% international students. On the makeup of that, about 35% to 36%, I would say, were probably students from Asia, because of course they're natural trading partners in Asia. There were a lot of Indians as well, because of the trade and also because of the proximity. They have three billion people on their doorstep who they do business with.

For a single answer, don't you see that as more of a natural reason why Australia, with the same per capita, in essence, for land mass, has a lot more foreign students?

Dr. Scott McAlpine: No, not necessarily. Certainly Australia has the proximity to high population areas that Canada doesn't. That being said, Australia is also investing very substantially in international education and they have far fewer universities than Canada does. They have targeted international education as an economic driver as well as potentially a solution to their demographic crisis, hoping that the international students will come to Australia, experience the sun, and stay.

Mr. Brian Jean: In fact, that's what's happening. Most of them, I know, going through my MBA with many Asian students there, looked at that as a stepping stone to get into a Commonwealth country—Australia, Canada, and the U.S. They looked at going to Australia as an opportunity to go into a job in another country; they said that if they did well there, the opportunity to move forward into another area of the world was very good.

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Absolutely. As a Commonwealth country, Canada could become more and more of a stepping stone for individuals wishing to immigrate into the developed countries, into the west.

Mr. Brian Jean: Of course, our jurisdictional issues are different, constitutionally bound to what we have, and here in Canada the provinces are ultimately responsible for administering education.

What role do you see for the provinces? I came back with a law degree, but I wasn't able to practise until I went to UBC for a period of time. Do you see that interrelationship, that provinces should get on the bandwagon with this? I know they're very competitive province to province and school to school for international students. I think they pay somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$25,000 to \$45,000 per year, depending on the discipline.

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Correct.

Mr. Brian Jean: I know it's quite expensive. It's a very competitive process. Do you see that they could work together to bind a Canada-wide strategy, instead of a competitive one?

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Absolutely. In fact what CBIE as well as the task force are recommending is a national branding strategy. Imagine Canada is the education brand we have, so an expansion of that. We're working very closely with CMEC, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, as well as with DFAIT and other bodies.

I think there is a real appetite for cooperation, rather than competition, because really the dominant factor is the country, not the province.

•(1630)

Mr. Brian Jean: I understand.

Of course, there are jurisdictional issues there, as I said.

Did you say 33% of Germans travel abroad or that Germans make up 33% of international students?

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Thirty-three per cent of German students are in exchange programs abroad.

Mr. Brian Jean: Thank you.

I do want to move to Mr. Smillie just for a moment.

Mr. Smillie, I am from Fort McMurray. I have to tell you that what they reimburse is not \$120. It's about \$180 a day now, and that's what it costs to house these people at camps, including swimming pools, weight rooms, massage therapists, and all the rest. It's not really a camp.

I really like your idea, and I've been advocating since 2005 for a tax credit on travel and mobility.

I only have about 30 seconds left. Do you see the partnerships that Keyano College, for instance, in Fort McMurray, Portage College in Lac La Biche, and others across northern Alberta have made in the last two or three years of high school, in training people, as a model that we could take across the country, to make sure that the trade colleges in Newfoundland and Labrador or Nova Scotia are training people in partnership to work these jobs, which we're going to need in every part of the country sooner or later, across the north, Quebec, the Maritimes, etc.? Do you see that opportunity?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Any unique or better way to train more workers and get them on the job faster is something that adds value. If Keyano College is doing something and it works in Alberta, let's do it in Newfoundland. Pretty soon, Newfoundland and Alberta are going to be competing for each other's workers, with some of the offshore and the lower Churchill, etc. So anything we can do, whoever is delivering provincial curriculums, be it community colleges, private organizations, unions, whatever...let's make sure we can get as many people trained as possible for the crunch that's coming.

Mr. Brian Jean: And I would encourage the organization to get involved with that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jean.

I always thought you moved to Australia to become a professional surfer. That's what you told me.

We'll go to

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mai, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to say hello to the witnesses here today. I want to begin by thanking you for joining us.

Mr. Lounds—just so I can fully understand your position—are you also a member of the Green Budget Coalition or do you agree with the principles that coalition promotes?

[English]

Mr. John Lounds: We're a member of the Green Budget Coalition, and every year there are proposals that are prepared by the Green Budget Coalition and presented to the committees and various others. That said, the coalition also has each individual group present their own interest areas, so that's why the Nature Conservancy itself—its expertise—focuses on land conservation.

Mr. Hoang Mai: The Green Budget Coalition did come to the finance committee and actually were proposing a cap and trade system. Is that something that you would support also?

Mr. John Lounds: That's not an area of expertise that our particular group has, so I wouldn't be able to speak to that. We're an on-the-ground conservation services organization, so basically we focus on what we can achieve for habitat conservation. That's what we do.

Mr. Hoang Mai: But in terms of conservation, I saw on your website that there are benefits for credits for carbon capture. Some of the land you have will actually provide some credits. I think I read that something like \$4 million was already part of a system. Can you expand on that?

Mr. John Lounds: Yes. As a pilot project, we've taken a look at whether this is an area—as you may know, in British Columbia there's a system for carbon credits, and we took a look at whether there is something here that can help with providing funds for the ongoing stewardship of lands. It's not only the cost of acquiring properties that's important, but you have to take care of them over the long term. That is something we've taken a look at. We're currently examining that to make sure it is something that can actually work.

I know there's a lot of discussion going on, both internationally and provincially, and elsewhere, about the standards under which these things can operate, so it's an area of interest that we're looking at. We're approaching that from the practical.... If people out there are interested in this, how can that then benefit getting great conservation work done on the ground? Obviously the carbon needs to be sequestered, and the forests, etc.

• (1635)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Thank you very much.

For the Building and Construction Trades, you're talking about infrastructure, obviously investment, and something stable. Is what the government has done so far sufficient, or is there something you want more of—for instance, the transfer of the gas tax, transferring it in a more stable fund that will allow infrastructure investments? Is that something you would push for?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Sure. The infrastructure stimulus fund that moved us through the recession absolutely kept people working in the thousands.

We work with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, and at the end of the day, I think municipalities, provinces, and the federal government have a vested interest in planning for the future, so that when we have money available, just like the infrastructure stimulus fund, we're not scrambling around trying to find projects to build. The small municipality, for instance, might not have had anything in the hopper, so to speak, because they could never dream that they would have the kinds of funds that were available.

Similar to the FCM, we would say there has to be something stable. It also allows skilled trades workers to go to work on a consistent basis. If you have municipalities upgrading their water systems, upgrading transit, upgrading other infrastructure, it means construction companies are bidding on that stuff, and it means that people in everyone's ridings are going to work on a regular basis.

There's value in planning ahead. I'm not a funding formula expert, but what we do know is that when we're labour force planning—

Mr. Hoang Mai: Just quickly, I saw in your brief that you support Bill C-201, from Chris Charlton. Can you quickly give us a note on that?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Chris Charlton introduced this bill, maybe eight or nine years ago, as a way to get the discussion going on mobility. It currently is in the mix in terms of private members business. She has told me that if the government decides to put some of the spirit of her bill into a budget, she'd gladly withdraw it. It's not a partisan issue; it's to get discussion going about mobility in the skilled trades.

Mr. Hoang Mai: I see.

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Mai.

We'll go to Mr. Van Kesteren, please.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you all for being here, and what an excellent panel it is, too. There are so many questions I could ask.

I do want to go to Mr. Liss, though. You talked about a data infrastructure program, and it sounds similar to the knowledge infrastructure program our government has introduced. Can you explain a little more about how it would work? Would you suppose it would be temporary funding as opposed to a long-term measure, and what would be the cost? Also, have you any idea where we could pull the funds from? Have you thought about that?

Dr. Steven Liss: I think it's a particularly important point with respect to where the future lies around data. The government makes significant investments in infrastructure to support data, computing, analytics, and there's no doubt that an ongoing need to refresh and renew that is a subject of great concern and advocacy through competitive funding programs that currently exist.

What is really primarily and most importantly needed is a national framework to support a system. It really is about an integration of all the pieces of a rather large landscape of various different parts and bits that aren't all, what I would think arguably, well connected and integrated. For example, talking to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources in the Northwest Territories about the sheer volume of data and information that's so relevant to the socio-economic conditions of extractive industries, climate change, and so forth—we're drinking from the fire hose. They're looking at support across Canada for using that data for all sorts of policy and economic development purposes. We have a similar scenario unfolding across the country, as well as the need to be much more globally connected with respect to our data and access to that data internationally.

It's really about a system to understand how best to integrate and to effectively use our resources, which we do make investments in, more efficiently and more effectively.

• (1640)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: You talked about building partnerships, and you identified the small and the medium-sized businesses. You know our government is very supportive of public-private partnerships. Can you go into more detail about how these have been established and the results you've seen, how successful they've been? How can we get SMEs and the private sector more involved in these types of partnerships?

Dr. Steven Liss: Well, you're beginning to see some of this unfolding with respect to data and analytics with the investments that large companies like IBM have been making to support innovative research, encouraging the technology development they're investing in to support and connect to small and medium-sized enterprises to be able to access the type of infrastructure. That's one illustration.

I think of the investments that have come through FedDev Ontario, the centres of excellence in commercialization and research, and the many examples of innovation taking place across Canada with respect to partnerships. The access to infrastructure in post-secondary institutions, both in colleges and universities, and also the mobility of young people between the respective institutions and organizations are other examples. In that context, I think that's an area where Canada isn't as well positioned as it could be with respect to the porosity of our organizations and the movement of people between educational institutions, industry, and government.

The other thing to keep in mind is that the average age of an entrepreneur in the United States, if we want to look at that as a model, is 39. There's a lot learned between the time somebody exits some formal schooling at the post-secondary level and the time they become an entrepreneur.

I look at what is happening now with respect to innovative programs and entrepreneurship to get young people more engaged and more involved and aware of the opportunities. But there are some gaps with respect to available capital in Canada and an entrepreneurial spirit that is limited by that available resource, and the risk that is often seen to be a very high price to pay for entrepreneurship in this country.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I only have a few seconds. You mentioned 39 years as the average age in the United States. What is it in Canada? Do you know?

Dr. Steven Liss: I suspect it's probably similar, but it doesn't happen, really, out of school. We have to have the right environment to encourage the types of experiences and the environment that make people evolve to become entrepreneurs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Kesteren.

Mr. Marston, please.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Cohen, I had originally planned to start with someone else, but your presentation caught me. In my family we have dealt with post-partum depression and with schizophrenia. We had one family member who was medicated and hospitalized on and off for 50 years. What comes out of this is the awareness of the many places in which there's a shortfall in the system.

There are many reasons for that, and we're not in the blame game. I would just ask the members opposite to please give particular consideration to this presentation. I'm not going to ask you a question, because what you delivered to us was comprehensive, and your needs are well laid out. I just ask the members opposite to please take the time to look at it.

Mr. Smillie, do you ever work with the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Did you say the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board? I never—

Mr. Wayne Marston: Where are you from, sir? I'm sorry.

Mr. Christopher Smillie: I live in Ottawa now, but I'm from Oakville originally.

Mr. Wayne Marston: During the 1990s, we had the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board. It was a facility put together by an NDP government, and it worked with the federal government of the day to start laying plans for retraining of workers. It was a model that we thought was really exceptional. There were changes made when there was a change of government in Ontario, but it was a model that I think could be revisited here.

But if you have not worked with it, I'll move on to talk to you about the current reliance on temporary workers.

We have a situation in which several hundred thousand temporary foreign workers are being brought into the country. How is that affecting your members' ability to do their jobs?

Mr. Christopher Smillie: I'll speak to the skilled trades. I can't speak to some of the other sectors.

In our slice of the economy, the temporary foreign worker program is used effectively as a complementary HR tool. There are situations in which people are brought in from all around the world to work on construction sites. At the end of the day, in construction the numbers are...I think last year it was 4,600, in our trades. It's an economy with about 1.5 million workers in it.

We represent the skilled trades. Really, the top source country for these people has been the United States. So far the experience with the temporary foreign workers, so to speak, from the U.S. has been good. They're trained just as we are, they speak our language—

•(1645)

Mr. Wayne Marston: You're talking mainly about the skilled level.

Mr. Christopher Smillie: Yes.

It's tough in our trades, because the work is highly specialized, and these folks only exist in a few places in the world.

Mr. Wayne Marston: One thing that was evident when Ms. Glover was speaking to you was that cooperation goes back and forth between the building trades and the government. In light of Bill C-377.... It wasn't an awkward moment, but it was a little bit on the surprising side. We've heard so much negativity from the government side relative to unions and so on while we've been studying Bill C-377.

What was your reaction? When you first came in here, you made the point of your membership being voluntary. I thought that was very important.

Mr. Christopher Smillie: I had a bad dream that I had said bad things about Bill C-377 today.

At the end of the day, the partnership we have in place with the Government of Canada on such things as Helmets to Hardhats or with Minister Flaherty, Minister Finley, or Minister Oliver, etc., are based on an earned friendship.

As to the Bill C-377 stuff, you can read our testimony from October 25 as to where we are with that. But I want to make sure we don't get bogged down in that stuff and that we make sure the budget focuses on skills policy.

Mr. Wayne Marston: That was my point, Chair.

The Chair: Yes, we are stretching relevance to the maximum point here.

Mr. Wayne Marston: But that cooperation was the important point I wanted to make.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds, Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Do I?

Mr. McAlpine—in 30 seconds, sir—we've had foreign workers raised here. It strikes me as logical to try to retain the foreign students we have in this country as citizens.

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Absolutely.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Do you believe our government should be giving serious consideration to increasing its investment in international education with an eye to doing just that?

Dr. Scott McAlpine: Precisely. We have fairly good, robust data that shows that about 50% of the international students wish to stay in Canada. This speaks to some policy around the Canadian experience class. We need to develop ways to meet our targets in the CEC class of immigration.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Marston.

We'll go to Mr. Hoback, please.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It's great to see you here. I appreciate your testimony this afternoon. It's very interesting.

Unfortunately, I only get five minutes, so I'm going to go to Mr. Phillips and talk a bit about the grains and oilseeds sector.

Mr. Phillips, you mentioned in previous testimony that you were a seed grower, so you may have seen \$10 wheat in your days of growing seed. But I am curious. How many times have you seen \$8.50 or \$9 off the combine in wheat prices in your growing career?

Mr. Richard Phillips: Once.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Would that happen to be this year?

Mr. Richard Phillips: Yes.

Mr. Randy Hoback: That's very interesting.

You talked about changes to the Canadian Wheat Board. A lot of things have been put in place to support the Canadian Wheat Board, whether it's the grain grading system or the transportation system. But we made some changes in the budget implementation act that went through this committee. I am curious. You talked about further changes. What types of changes do we need to be looking at? Would it be in the grading? What areas?

Mr. Richard Phillips: We need a couple of things.

Number one, there's a lot of cost in running the Canadian Grain Commission. If we're paying even \$2 a tonne more than we need to on a 50,000-tonne vessel, that's \$100,000 on every boatload of grain that leaves Canada, and we export millions of tonnes. These are big numbers.

We need to go through the Canadian Grain Commission. Inward inspection is going away, but we need to ask what else they have had their fingers into over the years. What adds value and what doesn't add value to farmers? At the end of the day, when they move to cost recovery, farmers will pay 100% of the cost of the operations. We need some sort of mechanism of governance so we can make sure that what they're doing returns value to us. And then we're happy to pay for it. That's one of the things.

Number two is that we see a huge interest in people wanting to invest in wheat breeding in Canada. Canola is a huge success story. The acres have gone up, the yields have gone up, and the wealth back to farmers has gone up, because they're private and public, and producers have all worked together.

In wheat we never had that. We now have that opportunity. We need to have a system that will ensure that the private sector comes in and we can leverage their money, along with Agriculture Canada, universities.

Producers can come to the table with money too. We have to build that partnership. For that, they need more assurance that if they invest in research, their varieties will get registered for sale. Right now the variety registration system does not provide that confidence at all to any private breeders.

● (1650)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Again, I know the variety registration system on the agriculture committee.... We've seen a lot of issues there in the process. A lot of our winter wheat varieties, for example, are more accepted in the U.S.—and have sold in the U.S.—than they are in Canada, which is disappointing when you look at the economic benefit those varieties would have brought to our farmers.

You also touched on rail service levels and the importance of just-in-time delivery and being able to meet commitments. What types of changes do we need to have in the rail system to create some accountability?

Mr. Richard Phillips: Two things are top of mind.

We need some sort of reciprocal penalties. Right now if you don't load your railcar in time or if you overload one end of it too much, big penalties are applied to all the shippers. If the cars don't show up even within a week of when they're supposed to, there are no penalties for the railways.

This is how it affects the actual grassroots farmers. If you're trying to bid and sell grain into Turkey on a lentil contract, for example, you're asking what the odds are you'll get your railcars on time to get it to Montreal or to Thunder Bay to get it over there, and what the penalties are going to be. You're going to have to start paying less money to the farmers to allow for the likely penalties you're going to have for late delivery. And that all comes directly out of the farmers' pockets.

We need reciprocal penalties to help ensure better service. We also need a fair arbitration and dispute resolution process so that when there are disputes, we don't have to go through over a million dollars in a level of service complaint, as we have to today with the Canada Transportation Act. Small shippers can't do it, so they just lose out on sales from Canada.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Phillips, you talked about public research, having research dollars available for plant breeding. I'll use plant breeding as an example. Some farmers in Ontario were looking for a winter wheat breeder to be located here in Ontario.

What do you think the government needs to do as far as plant breeding goes? How do we make that work with the private sector so they're not necessarily competing against each other?

The Chair: Could you give a brief response, please?

Mr. Richard Phillips: Everything we have today is primarily predicated on having the Wheat Board involved. We have to look at how we are using our cluster money or DIAP money. We could review all that. We've had several years of experience.

The Ontario guys have great ideas as well, but the private sector has a lot of money it's willing to put into this. We just need to find a way to leverage it, to make use of it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hoback.

We'll go to Mrs. McLeod, please.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses. Again, we've had a great diversity of presentations.

Since my colleague pointed out page 3, I have to point out page 2. The Nature Conservancy website is a project I am particularly fond of. Maybe if I have time at the end we could perhaps have an opportunity to talk about how that matches and moves forward. It's a win-win, I think.

I would like to start with some specific questions to Ms. Cohen.

I came from one system where people could access physiotherapists and psychologists through extended health benefits without a doctor's referral. I notice that in the federal system it is very different. Intuitively, I know that we have busy physicians, and I think people are sometimes capable of recognizing the appropriate path to support.

Has there been any research on the appropriateness of access or the cost of one system versus the other? I think we have an opportunity to really say which is a better system. We need people to get help when they need it. Has there been any work done in that area?

Ms. Karen Cohen: Psychologists have, by legislation, though it differs by province, the authority to diagnose and deliver care. If someone decides to seek the services of a psychologist outside of a publicly funded system, of course, they could go straight there. The issue arises when they want to get reimbursed by their extended health care plans. There is great variability. Some underwriters will require a physician referral and some will not.

One part of the work we are commissioning will be surveys of stakeholders, including the insurance industry.

I can't give you any data on the differences in uptake when the bottleneck is created, but certainly it's happening. It creates an unnecessary delay, because the work that is going to be done is going to be done by the psychologist.

● (1655)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I'd be really curious to know if anyone would ever take up that particular task of studying one system versus the other, when you think of the cost of a physician visit. It would be a fascinating piece of work, because I think we have a natural opportunity.

To me, it seems fairly sensible that for many people, psychologists or physiotherapists might be their avenue of support.

Next I wanted to ask if you could expand a little further on what you were talking about regarding residency training within the federal system. Can you talk a little about what you envision there?

Ms. Karen Cohen: One of the great challenges in recruitment and retention, and there are several, is training. We heard recently that the Canadian Forces and Veterans Affairs have a need for psychologists, and Correctional Services has a need for psychologists. What we know, and we heard it from other panellists, is that students tend to stay where they train. Also where the need is has to participate in the development of the skill set they need to work in that particular environment. If a psychologist has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, he or she also needs to know something about the Canadian Forces to work with that population.

By creating those residency programs, you contribute to training, and you also provide a mechanism for recruitment and retention.

There is a rural and northern program in Winnipeg that trains psychologists to work in those communities. My understanding is that over 50% of their graduates actually stay to work in rural and northern venues.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Within the federal public service right now there are no residency programs at all.

Ms. Karen Cohen: As far as I know, one has recently been developed in Correctional Service Canada. We've been trying to advocate for the development of a residency program that might see clinical psychology students rotate through various departments, with perhaps four months in Veterans Affairs, four months in the Canadian Forces, and time in Correctional Service Canada to help try to meet that resource need.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Are you training enough psychologists right now to meet the needs anyway, or is there a significant shortage?

Ms. Karen Cohen: That's a really good question. The only benchmark I am aware of is one in the area of school psychology. We know that the greatest return on investment when it comes to mental health is with children.

The benchmark is about one psychologist for every thousand students. The European Federation of Psychologists' Associations guesses that it should be about one to 1,500. In Canada it really is all over the map. Half the psychologists in the country are in Quebec, which is interesting, and in the rest of the jurisdictions it's one to 3,000 or 4,000. In rural and remote areas, it's about one to 28,000.

My answer on whether there are enough psychologists is that I'm not sure we have a clear benchmark in Canada. But we do know that we're the largest group. There are four times as many psychologists as psychiatrists licensed to practice.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. McLeod.

We're almost out of time. I don't have time for a full round, but I did want to just ask one question.

Mr. Lounds, your presentation here is very interesting in terms of what you have accomplished as an organization. Do you have a sense as to what impact the setting aside of these lands in particular has had on carbon emissions? People talk about one half of the carbon cycle. We often don't talk about the other in terms of

absorption. Do you have any sense as an organization of what sort of an impact you have had?

Mr. John Lounds: We wouldn't have a sense of what it would be in terms of a calculation. Clearly, all growing material sequesters carbon. The more that happens, you will end up with a...except for all the buffer you have to build into it with regard to disease, fire, etc., that may impact upon it. That's why we have been experimenting to look in more detail at what exactly that looks like in one particular forest that we have in British Columbia. We will have to see how that goes. It's not a very simple thing to be calculating.

The Chair: I can imagine that. I would encourage you, as an organization, to have something—even a ballpark figure—that you could present.

Mr. John Lounds: The 3,200 square kilometres that we have, to give a sense of size, is actually about more than four times the currently mined oil sands area in northern Alberta. It's not an insubstantial amount of land that is being conserved. If we can figure out how to both develop our economy and put forward conservation measures at the same time, we are off to the races.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you.

I would like to continue this discussion. It has been a very good one. I unfortunately have to end our panel here.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being with us here this afternoon. Thank you for your presentations and your responses to our questions.

Colleagues, we will suspend for a couple of minutes and bring the next panel forward. Thank you.

• (1700)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Chair: I will call this meeting back to order, and I encourage colleagues to find their seats, please.

We are continuing our discussion of pre-budget consultations 2012, pursuant to Standing Order 83.1. This is the 92nd meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance. This is our second panel today.

We have five organizations presenting: first of all, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada; second, the Canadian Climate Forum; third, we have the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research; fourth, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association; and fifth, we have the Retail Council of Canada.

You each have five minutes for your opening statement.

We will begin with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and work our way down the line.

Please begin.

Dr. Rachel Gouin (Manager, Research and Public Policy, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada): Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Rachel. I'm with Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. I'm very grateful to be speaking here today.

Canada is facing an unprecedented demographic shift that will require its young people to be educated, skilled, and able to enter the workforce. The country's economic recovery and growth depends, in part, on its workforce and on young Canadians' ability to do their part. We know Canada's youth have great potential, but some of them struggle to achieve that potential because they lack the services and supportive relationships that would make the difference between the streets and a job, between dropping out or pursuing post-secondary education, and between the job they can get and the job that will inspire them to give their best.

No single measure will prepare young people to succeed in school and enter the workforce, but quality after-school programs are part of the solution. Such programs improve school outcomes, help young people build job skills, expand social networks, and gain the experience they need to enter a competitive job market.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada are leading providers of quality after-school programs that support the healthy physical, mental, educational, and social development of children. Our association of 100 clubs reaches some 200,000 children, youth, and families each year in 650 community locations across Canada. Low-income families represent 60% of those we serve. Clubs are located in neighbourhoods where we're most needed, including large city centres, suburbs, remote rural communities, and first nations reserves.

Boys and Girls Clubs are safe and supportive places. When you speak with Cornwall community Police Chief Daniel Parkinson, he'll tell you that crime has gone down 40% as a result of the Boys and Girls Clubs presence in the community. Young people have access to more recreation programs, support to succeed in school, and leadership and employment opportunities, and that has made all the difference. Twice now, the Cornwall club has partnered to run the Skills Link program for local youth.

At the national level, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is working with the private sector to invest in our young people's success. In partnership with Kal Tire, we're helping to address the skilled trades shortages. The Skilled4Success program offers on-site job shadowing, connections to community members working in the trades, career planning information, and support in pursuing a certified apprenticeship. There are 12 Boys and Girls clubs across the country that are offering the program in this first year of our partnership.

We want young people to succeed. We're engaging with government and the private sector to make this happen. Our full recommendations are in the brief we've submitted to the committee, but I'd like to highlight a few here.

We want to underline the importance of Canada's youth employment strategy. Programs such as Career Focus, Skills Link, and Canada Summer Jobs enable clubs to provide youth with valuable work experience. The Skills Link program is especially relevant to clubs because it promotes the human capital and employability of a

population that faces many barriers to employment. We would see great benefit in enhancing this program.

Youth who struggle with mental health problems and illnesses need extra support. We encourage the government to help create opportunities for these youth to work in a supportive environment, thus ensuring they have a strong start in the workforce and they increase their labour market participation. A program similar to Skills Link, offered to organizations and businesses that can provide a supportive workplace, would be extremely valuable.

We also need to make sure that young people stay on a positive life path. A criminal record can be a real barrier in a young person's prime earning years. It's incumbent on us to ensure that few young people see crime as a viable option. We urge you to enhance the funding to the youth justice fund and the youth gang prevention fund, and ensure that employment opportunities are part of gang prevention efforts.

We also ask you to bolster the national crime prevention strategy to help communities reach young people before they enter the justice system.

• (1710)

The Chair: One minute.

Dr. Rachel Gouin: Increased funding on its own won't be enough. It takes years to build the kinds of relationships that will save a young person's life and make the difference between them choosing the streets or the Skills Link program at their local club. Programs that are achieving results in communities that need them should be able to access longer-term funding. We hope to see a change in policy that will allow long-term and stable investments in demonstrated results. We understand that Motion 407, presented by the MP for Surrey North, is an effort in this direction.

There's much we can do to ensure that Canada's young people succeed, enter the workforce, and contribute to the economy. Communities, non-profit organizations, the private sector, and government all have a role to play in securing a prosperous and enriching future for our young people, and for all Canadians. Together we can make a little more investment, with a long-term view, go a long way towards that goal.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll now hear from the Canadian Climate Forum, please.

Dr. Gordon McBean (Chairman, Board of Directors, Canadian Climate Forum): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a presentation, and I am really speaking to the brief we've submitted.

The Canadian Climate Forum is a non-governmental organization dedicated to accelerating the uptake and use of knowledge about Canada's weather and climate systems as they are now and as they will be in the future. This is for the benefit of our economic and social societies and structures, and also, as I said, for the benefit of our children and grandchildren, because the climate, our weather, will affect them now and through the course of their lives. We've seen in very recent events the impact, for example, of Hurricane Sandy just three weeks ago on people, children, and the elderly in the United States. These kinds of events have huge economic and social implications—\$50 billion is the estimate so far for Hurricane Sandy.

We've had those kinds of events in Canada. The Canadian insurance corporations collectively note that in 2011 they spent \$1.7 billion in payouts to compensate people for climate-related disasters involving wind, rain, and water. In the early part of this past decade, the cost of the droughts on the Canadian prairies to the grain growers and other parts of our agriculture community was in excess of \$5 billion. The Montreal ice storm cost us over \$5 billion when it happened.

We need to know about these events, how they are happening, how they are changing in the future, and in that way be able to provide more information for Canadians and more information for the economic parts of Canada's economy. The estimate is that the Canadian weather-dependent industries exceed, on an annual basis, over \$100 billion a year in activities. When you think of Canada as a natural resource-based economy, we are really based on our weather and climate.

I've spent all of my professional life studying weather and climate, and I know how the trees, the nature conservancies, and those kinds of things depend on where the climate is and how it is, and how the weather affects them.

Smog is another issue. The Canadian Medical Association has estimated literally billions of dollars—the last numbers I saw—huge amounts...a \$250 billion cost by 2030, in terms of the smog effects on the health of Canadians, including our veterans, who have gone through a long part of their life. It will affect mostly the elderly and the young.

So we need to know about these kinds of things. Research has told us generally what to expect. It can provide us with better information in the future. We just need to continue to support that kind of information.

There was a question earlier from one of the distinguished members of this committee about carbon emissions from forests. The Canadian Carbon Program, previously supported by research funds, actually provided those numbers, and if I'd known that was going to be a question, I would have given you the answer, but I can't off the top of my head. But we know through research pretty well how much does come in and out of our natural forest ecosystems in Canada.

As I said, we need to have a continued involvement in this issue. As a recommendation from the Canadian Climate Forum, I will call for a policy focus on the potential impacts of weather, our day-to-day stuff and how it is changing, which is what we call climate, as developed within key sectors: the economic development of the Arctic, for example; the energy sector—the need to adapt to weather and climate to reduce these impacts. There are benefits of a changing climate. The agricultural community, for example, needs to know what crop is going to grow next year. By knowing that, we can advise them.

I've worked with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture through many meetings over the last decade, working with them on how we can better pick the crops that will grow most effectively 10 years from now as opposed to 10 years ago. So we need that solid and sustained investment in new knowledge, key facilities, and knowledge workers, training the population through the Council of Ontario Universities, which was here before, but also the universities from coast to coast in Canada, including the high Arctic.

We need to be able to use this information in ways that are effective, and in that way information networks will be very important.

In recognition of the Canadian scientific brainpower as an asset and a commodity, and its importance, we should be working to foster partnerships, skills development, competitiveness, and international partnerships. The Canadian Climate Forum would be happy to assist and play a role in these kinds of activities.

● (1715)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McBean.

We'll hear from Ms. Aiken now, please.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Alice Aiken (Director, Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Finance.

[*English*]

I'm Dr. Alice Aiken, the scientific director of the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, a professor at Queen's University, and a proud veteran of the Royal Canadian Navy.

I am joined today by my colleague Dr. Stéphanie Bélanger, the associate director, a professor at the Royal Military College, and an officer in the reserve force.

The Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, or CIMVHR, is a network of Canadian researchers from across the country who are committed strongly to working together to improve the health and employment outcomes of military personnel, veterans, and their families. We are proud to say that our network includes over 300 researchers and clinicians from over 25 universities across the country, and we are growing.

We are here today to recommend that the Government of Canada invest in the work undertaken by our network. Mental and physical health challenges prevent many Canadians from participating fully in society and contributing to the economy. Veterans and their families are particularly vulnerable. The goal of CIMVHR is to optimize the potential of every one of the more than 700,000 veterans living in Canada.

The evidence shows that this issue needs our focused attention. If we consider the number of people serving, those who have served, and their families, we are talking about two million to three million Canadians who can be positively impacted by the work we are doing. That's not to mention all the others in similar professions, such as police, firefighters, paramedics, and their families.

One major concern is that only 11% of Canadian veterans are clients of Veterans Affairs Canada, which means that almost 90% are part of a public health system that does not understand or address their particular needs.

The researchers working through the CIMVHR network know that good health is critical to gaining productive employment. Working at the coal face between clinicians and researchers, CIMVHR provides a critical platform for ensuring that cutting-edge research is immediately translated into new policies, programs, and practices that improve the outcomes for veterans and their families.

We also provide a much-needed platform for the coordination of researchers and health practitioners working in the area. For example, we've linked the sport concussion community together with defence scientists and practitioners working on blast injury so that they can find the best possible diagnosis and treatment techniques for traumatic brain injury.

In fact, the Ontario concussion network will be presenting a special workshop—on best practices for recognizing, diagnosing, and treating mild traumatic brain injury—to military physicians at our upcoming conference, the military and veteran health research forum, this November 26 to 28.

As a researcher, I am working with a team of collaborators to get information about the unique needs of veterans into the hands of civilian family physicians so that they can better understand this special population. We have the full support of the Canadian Medical Association and will be testing the methodology with 50,000 Canadian physicians in the new year. Veterans' health information will roll out by the end of 2013. We believe this has the capacity to immediately impact the health of hundreds of thousands of veterans.

Dr. Bélanger is the Canadian expert on testimony of war. She is now working with a pan-Canadian team of mental health researchers to determine the parts of these stories that can give insight into the mental health needs of a soldier and how the health care community can best address these needs.

These are only brief illustrations of the very important work the CIMVHR network has embarked upon. Government support for the network is an excellent investment, because it will directly impact the health and workforce productivity of Canadian veterans and their families. It will reduce the costs of health care insurance and benefits provided by VAC, and it will leverage, strengthen, and grow the impact of the work currently being undertaken by our national networkers of researchers and clinicians.

We are asking for a very modest investment of \$15 million over five years. We will leverage this funding through public-private partnerships, with industry, through Canadian philanthropic support, and by partnering with research funding organizations and our military allies.

Of this money, 60% will go directly into funding new front-line research that will have an impact in a one- to five-year timeframe—for example, new ways to diagnose and treat post-traumatic stress disorder—and 40% will go to support arm's-length research that validates the many programs, practices, and policies that have been implemented for these beneficiaries.

At CIMVHR, we are committed to making a difference in the health and future of our veterans and their families. Diminishing the impact of combat-related stress, hastening recovery after injury, and getting veterans into good jobs is our mission.

• (1720)

With this investment the government had the unprecedented chance to affect the lives of millions of Canadians.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll hear from Ms. Reynolds now, please.

Ms. Joyce Reynolds (Executive Vice-President, Government Affairs, Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon. It's a pleasure to speak to you this afternoon on behalf of the \$65 billion restaurant industry.

The restaurant industry is the fourth largest private sector employer in Canada, with 1.1 million employees. This is more than agriculture, forestry, automotive, manufacturing, mining, and oil and gas extraction combined. Each one of these industries has been the focus of far more government resources and attention than the restaurant industry.

Every \$1 million in restaurant sales creates nearly 27 jobs, making our industry one of the top five job creators in the country. Every dollar spent at a restaurant generates an additional \$1.85 in spending in the rest of the economy, well above the average for all industries in Canada.

We indirectly employ over 250,000 Canadians. So far in 2012, the restaurant industry is one of the top two job creators in Canada, and its net employment has risen by 28,000 jobs already this year.

One in five Canadian youth between the ages of 15 and 24 work in restaurants. This represents more than 483,000 young people and accounts for more than 40% of the jobs in our industry. The restaurant industry is also the source of first job experience for 22% of Canadians, and nearly one-third of Canadians have worked in the industry at some point in their lives.

Canadians operate restaurants in every corner of the country, from large centres to remote communities, and they continually demonstrate their innovation and drive. For government to focus primarily on industries in crisis or in need of subsidies and bailouts ignores a key group of entrepreneurs and a tremendous opportunity for the Canadian economy.

Restaurants need a home in Ottawa. Currently no government department is responsible for the restaurant industry and no minister champions the industry.

Our primary ask today is the assignment of an assistant deputy minister to be responsible for our industry within a key department such as Industry, and to ensure there is a restaurant lens through which policy decisions are reviewed.

With the short time available to me, I want to key in on three issues, two that were in our submission that was submitted earlier this year.

The first is the unfair tax treatment of restaurant meals. When the GST was first contemplated, the concept was to tax everything sold at the retail level without exemptions. A strong argument was made, however, that since food was essential, it should not be subject to GST. This seemingly reasonable compromise in 1991 has had unintended consequences over 20 years later.

Diane and I cooperate and agree on a lot of issues, but this is one where we have to agree to disagree. Her industry, the grocery sector, has capitalized on the GST exemption advantage by introducing thousands of new products, heat-and-eat versions of almost everything found on restaurant menus. Frozen meals processed offshore are tax-free while meals prepared in restaurants by Canadians are taxed. The rules are arbitrary and they're confusing.

Restaurants introduce Canadians to new cuisine, whether it's African, Thai, or Indian, and once Canadians decide they like these items, groceries come along and package them and sell them tax-free to Canadians. This loophole is unfair and it's hurting restaurants. We are asking for the GST exemption for ready-to-heat meals to be removed.

Second, I want to talk about modernizing our supply management system. The price of milk set by the Canadian Dairy Commission has climbed to unprecedented levels, resulting in cross-border runs on U.S. stores and milk and cheese smuggling operations. Currently, frozen pizza manufacturers are allowed to pay for Canadian mozzarella at U.S. market prices. Fresh pizza makers who must pay up to 30% more for their mozzarella are asking for a level playing field.

CRFA is asking the federal government to modernize the supply management system. It's not only hurting businesses and consumers, but it's also curtailing growth in the market for dairy and poultry products. We think we can help grow the dairy and poultry market in Canada.

Finally, I'd like to focus on credit card fees. It wasn't originally in my submission, but the Visa announcement recently that they are going to significantly increase their prices next year and add another super premium card has our members really incensed, so I felt I needed to bring it to your attention today.

We appreciate that government introduced and is now updating the code of conduct for credit and debit card companies in Canada. While the code of conduct has prevented MasterCard and Visa from introducing reward-based debit cards with much higher fees, it has not curtailed the rising cost of credit card fees and the market share of high-cost premium credit cards that offers rewards to cardholders.

● (1725)

The premium cards carry significantly higher fees that are charged to merchants, even though they see no increase in benefit. In some instances, the credit card can attract a different processing fee once it has been deemed high spend. Merchants are required to accept all credit cards and cannot charge cardholders a fee to offset any of these changes. As a result, premium credit cardholders reap the benefits, and the additional costs are reflected in higher menu prices for all restaurant customers and tighter margins for restaurant operators.

The Competition Bureau has challenged Visa and MasterCard's unfair merchant rules.

Basically, what I'm asking for here, Mr. Chair, is that government take action to eliminate the "honour all cards" rule and permit surcharging, and that it be included in the code of conduct.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Reynolds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brisebois, go ahead.

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Brisebois (President and Chief Executive Officer, Retail Council of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to also add a few ad lib notes.

[*Translation*]

I want to begin by thanking you for inviting us to appear before the committee.

The Retail Council of Canada represents small, medium and large Canadian retailers. Our members manage over 84% of all retail sales in Canada, with the exception of the automotive industry. Our sector generates sales totalling \$300 billion. We employ two million Canadians.

Today, we will focus on import tariffs on finished products. To give you an example, we have included in our presentation a list of tariffs that affect the price of hockey equipment.

[English]

Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to add at this point, as I move to my presentation in English, that I do agree with Joyce on credit card fees, but that's where I would stop. We can debate the matter a bit later. Even though I do have a lot of time and respect for Joyce, I won't agree on that one. It will at least make the last session today a bit spicier than expected.

The Retail Council of Canada has submitted a proposal to the Department of Finance officials for the elimination of select tariffs where there is much competition for customers' business, where there's limited or no domestic manufacturing here, and where it mirrors the priorities of government, such as the support of health and well-being, sports, and active living that is accessible to people of all incomes.

Mr. Chairman, my remarks will be very short. I would like to ask the committee to support our initiative and our industry request to ensure that we eliminate key import tariffs on finished goods in the upcoming budget.

I would like to draw your attention to the fourth slide that we've provided in your deck, which shows a hockey player in a Canadian uniform and a hockey player in an American or U.S. uniform. Most important, *ce qui est important*, we show that with existing tariffs in Canada, for identical equipment it costs a family here \$200 more to outfit a player in this country versus the United States.

• (1730)

[Translation]

Duty alignment will help Canadian families save over \$120 million.

[English]

Aligning duties will save Canadian families \$120 million.

I will not go through all of the slides. I think we've spoken on this matter quite often, and it will be my pleasure to answer questions at a later time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll begin members' questions with Ms. Nash, please.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Well, I have to start with you, Ms. Brisebois. As the mother of three sons who are hockey players, it hits close to home. I'm struck by the products you list for which we have higher tariffs than in the U.S. These are products that we don't manufacture here in Canada, so really I guess your point is that these are just a tax against Canadian retailers that isn't based on protecting an industry here in Canada. Is that the message you're giving us?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: Let me go back for a moment and say that the first round of tariffs and tariff elimination on finished goods was around 1993. Very little has been done since then. The focus, understandably so, was on manufacturing and eliminating as many tariffs as possible for that sector.

But things have changed. We know a lot of the products that are sold in retail stores in Canada, and indeed in the United States, are made in Asia. What is important here is to ensure that there is a level playing field for families who are equipping kids, for example, to play hockey. It's to ensure that in fact those tariffs on finished goods are reduced or eliminated.

Ms. Peggy Nash: I can see a logic where we have an industry here and we're trying to advance and promote that industry, but what I hear you saying is that it's really just the retailers being dinged with this.

Let me ask you another question. There was an increase in the last budget in the personal exemption for trans-border shopping. Is that affecting retailers in border communities? Are you seeing an impact on your membership because people can claim a higher exemption when they go across the border to shop?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: The greatest impact we've seen—well, the simple answer to the question is yes. Families are very cost-conscious.

However, the impact has been greater—and Joyce would know this as well—on the food sector. The number one item purchased when people shop cross-border, especially one-day shopping, is groceries. Most of those goods—and I know this is not a popular topic—are supply-managed goods: dairy products, poultry, then gas, liquor, and cigarettes. Those products are purchased on same-day trips. The people who are travelling and purchasing those goods are also purchasing other goods as well as staying in restaurants and hotels.

So there's no question that cross-border shopping has a huge impact on the entire community.

• (1735)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Yes, I think the exemption wasn't just for one day. I think the 48-hour exemption went up.

Ms. Reynolds, I hear your comments about the hot mozzarella competition. For both the retail and the restaurant sectors, these are businesses—some are large, but many of them are small entrepreneurs.

I think of my own neighbourhood, full of small restaurants and retailers. They hire locally. Often their products are local products. We've got some celebrity chefs in our neighbourhood whom we prize. You don't want to put barriers on that kind of local commerce because they are hiring a lot of people locally.

I hear a concern from retailers and restaurateurs about credit card fees, that they're incredibly high, and that is certainly an issue that many retailers and restaurateurs have raised, so I appreciate your point on that.

Lastly, I want to ask the Boys and Girls Clubs how we stack up internationally when it comes to youth crime prevention. I don't feel we're putting enough money into that.

The Chair: A brief response, please.

Dr. Rachel Gouin: I could verify that and report back to the committee. Off the top of my head, I don't know the international stats well enough to be able to see how we compare. But I would be happy to get back to you on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Nash.

Ms. McLeod, go ahead, please.

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

Again, thank you to all the presenters for speaking on very diverse and important areas that we need to reflect on.

I'd like to start with Ms. Aiken. We've all been home for the Remembrance Day week, and I had conversations with reservists in the riding I represent. A number of them had done tours of duty in Afghanistan and some had struggled on their return.

I was talking to them about the care that was available. What stood out in my mind was some of them telling me that they needed choices. I look at your comment that only a few, a small percentage, work through Veterans Affairs to get the care they need. One of these gentlemen found support locally with his church and with his psychologist.

Could you talk more about how our veterans are seeking care, especially in the area of post-traumatic stress disorder?

Dr. Alice Aiken: It's a great question.

There are 700,000 veterans and only 72,000 are clients of Veteran Affairs Canada. They really are part of a health care system that doesn't understand them at all or their unique needs. We also know from the research that particularly mental health issues don't always show up right away when you return from a tour. Veterans Affairs Canada will tell us that it can take 5, 10, or even 50 years for a mental health problem to surface. At that time, people aren't always capable of going back to Veterans Affairs Canada and navigating the system in order to access benefits. They really are part of a system that doesn't understand their unique needs.

The research would also tell us that while there is some crossover—for example, post-traumatic stress disorder—really, military-related post-traumatic stress disorder is very different from trauma-related, where you are surprised by an attack or a traumatic event, whereas the military are running headlong into it. There are some subtle differences in the assessment and treatment of disorders like that.

I also heard you ask the CEO of the Canadian Psychological Association about access to other professionals. That's a huge issue in the Canadian system. If they are clients of Veterans Affairs Canada, they will have access to physiotherapy and psychology and all of those things provided, whereas if they are just in the public

system, they may not. If they don't have health insurance, they don't have those things covered.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Would you say that when I am having these conversations I should be encouraging them to make those connections? What would you say to the thought they express, that "This is where I am comfortable seeking my care, even though it might not be as expert"? Not every community has the ability to provide that expert kind of service.

How do you provide outreach to your rural or smaller urban areas? How do they provide that expertise and outreach?

• (1740)

Dr. Alice Aiken: As I mentioned, what's really critical in some of the work I am doing with a great team of researchers is that we are trying to get that specific information into the hands of clinicians working on the front line in all communities across Canada. We are looking at the specific health needs of veterans, and we are working with the Canadian Medical Association to disseminate that to all Canadian primary care physicians. We really are trying to get it into the communities.

I would agree with you. I would think that people don't want to leave their hometown to seek care. If they get coverage by Veterans Affairs Canada, they often don't have to. It's a health insurance system, right? It's not specific practitioners.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: A quick question on your \$50 million over five years. Is that strictly research dollars?

Dr. Alice Aiken: No. It would be for research and implementation of policies and programs—really working at the coal face to get cutting-edge research into the policies and practices that are happening.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Brison, please.

Hon. Scott Brison: Thank you all very much for joining us today.

Dr. Aiken, have you calculated the potential savings to Canadian governments at all levels of making this sort of investment? It stands to reason that if we conduct the kind of research you are speaking of, the social and economic benefits in the future ought to be quite significant in terms of a multiplier effect.

Dr. Alice Aiken: Yes. We haven't done the exact calculations, but really, when you look at the numbers—700,000 veterans—everybody has family members, parents, siblings, and children. We know there is trans-generational impact of military service. Ensuring people have the best health care they can have within our system is going to make them more productive members of society.

We already know that the majority of veterans who are released feel underemployed. While their tangible skills may be used, the intangible skills that you learn in the military of loyalty, teamwork, and resilience are not always harnessed and mobilized in the civilian workforce. Not to mention the families—resilience is a very strong characteristic within the families as well.

Hon. Scott Brison: Thank you very much.

In 2006, Sir Nicholas Stern's report identified the cost of not acting. It really made the point that there are going to be massive global costs associated with climate change. Should we be putting line items in budgets as governments, anticipating and preparing for those types of investments in the future? I visited a community in Newfoundland a couple of years ago where the mayor showed me a breakwater that was partially destroyed by more frequent and severe storms. The only road leading into the town was being threatened. At some point, that needs to be addressed. Should we be anticipating and budgeting for that pre-emptively?

Dr. Gordon McBean: Yes, certainly we should be making those investments in redeveloping our critical infrastructure. We have been reducing that infrastructure as a percentage of GDP over the last decade, and there is need for that kind of investment to reduce our impact.

My colleagues down the table, from the Retail Council and the restaurant association, for example, rely on the fact that their customers can actually get to the stores and restaurants. When a storm wipes out a bridge, or when it wiped out the Finch Avenue bridge road, as it did in 2005.... Incidentally, the rain storm that caused the wipeout of the Finch Avenue bridge road cost the insurance company \$650 million, which meant they just applied it to the rest of us through premiums.

Hon. Scott Brison: Thank you very much.

Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Brisebois, on the issue of credit cards and the regulatory framework, has the voluntary code of conduct achieved all of the objectives, or should we be looking at other models, including potentially the Australian model or other models?

That leads to another question. Which countries have it right in terms of regulatory framework around credit charges to businesses?

• (1745)

Ms. Diane Brisebois: I'll go first.

The current voluntary code served an important purpose, which was to ensure that merchants could continue to accept Interac debit, which is a low-cost, flat-rate debit payment transaction. The code basically allowed a merchant to say yes to Visa credit but no to Visa debit, which is what Joyce referred to earlier as the "honour all cards" rule. As you know, there is a case before the tribunal, so it will be interesting to see if the tribunal agrees that the "honour all cards" rule should be eliminated.

To answer the second part of your question, we believe that the voluntary code is working now, but we are concerned that it may not be tough enough going forward, considering what Visa has decided to do.

The Chair: There are about 20 seconds, Ms. Reynolds. Did you want to comment on that?

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: I would agree. I don't think there is a perfect system out there. What's happening in Australia is that certainly the fees are lower, but the number of cards they are introducing and the difference in fees between the cards—they're finding more and more of these premium and super premium cards are coming on the market, so they haven't completely resolved the issue with legislation.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brison.

Ms. Gallant, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and all my questions will be through you.

My questions are going to be directed to Dr. Aiken. Would you please tell us the types of research projects that you are coordinating that relate specifically to PTSD?

Dr. Alice Aiken: There are several projects going on, everything from the hard science side looking at brain biomarkers of PTSD for diagnosis.... One of the big problems has been that it's difficult to diagnose between mild traumatic brain injury, which is very common in areas where things are exploding, and post-traumatic stress disorder, or a person may suffer from both, and if you don't administer the correct treatment.... If you misdiagnose, you might administer the wrong treatment.

We have a really outstanding pan-Canadian team that we've managed to assemble, and they are looking at what are the brain biomarkers of PTSD to make diagnosis better.

We also have groups of people looking at new treatment techniques, novel treatment techniques. We have one of the groups that works in one of the operational stress injury clinics funded by Veterans Affairs coming to our upcoming forum to present to a whole group of civilian psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health workers. It's getting that information on current best practices treatment that they've studied, which they know is evidence-based, into the hands of front-line practitioners, so they can help the veterans. We're working really at both ends of the spectrum.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Do the universities actually use soldiers and veterans as subjects in their studies?

Dr. Alice Aiken: The answer is yes, some of them.

That hasn't been a smooth process to date, but it is now, with the advent of our organization. We are able to work really closely with the government. We have a college of peer reviewers, so if people put forward research to us, we kind of screen it first.

One of the issues is that we have quite a small military, so you can't keep testing them for everything. When we had a combat role in Afghanistan, some people went over and did studies and collected data, but you couldn't have everybody assessing the same rota every single time, because you get research fatigue or exhaustion. What some of them are doing is working with other populations initially and then bringing it to military populations once the methodology is well refined.

Veterans are a different story. For example, in the operational stress injury clinic there are a lot of veterans, so they really are able to work with patients on a real-time program, evaluate how it's working, and bring that back to other clinicians who might be working with these populations as well.

• (1750)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What sorts of studies are you coordinating in the area of suicide prevention that are not necessarily related to PTSD?

Dr. Alice Aiken: Interestingly, if you look at the Canadian-specific literature, almost every study that talks about suicide does talk about PTSD. But you're exactly right, it isn't always related to PTSD. In fact, we know from our British colleagues that in Canada the number one mental health issue for people who have served in a combat role is depression, not post-traumatic stress disorder. The Americans tend to have more post-traumatic stress disorder and the Brits tend to evolve to binge drinking. I don't know if those are cultural differences or what.

There are a few studies looking at suicide. I think one of the issues is still getting the data harnessed in Canada. We have really good anecdotal data on suicide, but the large-scale studies are still not showing an increased rate in suicide in regular-force males. The studies show an increase in regular-force females over the general population for suicide and in the reserve force.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When you are looking at the stats, are you looking at only the suicides that actually follow through, or do you have access to the stats where there are suicide attempts?

Dr. Alice Aiken: We don't have access to those stats.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gallant.

[Translation]

Mr. Caron, go ahead.

Mr. Guy Caron: Thank you very much.

I want to thank all of you for your presentations. My questions are mostly for Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Brisebois.

Although we agree when it comes to fees charged in the case of credit cards and debit cards, I have to disagree with your statements on supply management. I come from a riding and a region that depend heavily on family farms, especially in the dairy sector. Supply management is currently the only way for those farms to survive. That's not a form of subsidy, but a way to ensure that the prices paid to producers are not as volatile as in the United States, for instance.

Two factors come into play—the first of which is volatility. In the United States, between 2006 and 2008, milk prices almost doubled in a span of a few months. Prices then dropped by about 75% or 80%. That kind of a situation makes it very difficult for family farms to plan ahead.

The second factor is the following. In the United States, prices are temporarily lower—and once again, that depends on how volatile the market is—but producers are heavily subsidized. However, we are no longer subsidizing our farms, our producers. Since the U.S. does

subsidize, major discrepancies periodically occur between the prices paid to producers and consumer prices.

I am interested in your reaction to the arguments you are advancing regarding supply management. I can understand that you are looking after your own interests, but production is directly affected, especially when it comes to family farms.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: First of all, it's in our interests as an industry to have a healthy dairy and poultry industry here in Canada. We are very dependent on the dairy and poultry industries. Unfortunately, what's been happening over the last several years is that these products, particularly dairy, are being priced off our menus. If you look at restaurant menus in the U.S. and in other countries, you see far more dairy on the menu. In light of declining consumption, we think it's within the interests of that sector, as well as our sector, as well as consumers, to come up with a reformed system that will allow us to grow the industry here.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: I have a question about that. I understand what you are saying, but we don't agree on the extent of the problem.

You are probably familiar with the figures provided by Dairy Farmers of Canada. For instance, the farmer receives only about 9% of the money a restaurant owner makes on a glass of milk. So if the amount is \$2.25, the farmer receives about 21¢. The same goes for pizzas sold at restaurants. They cost \$18 on average, but the farmer receives only 67¢.

If supply management is so problematic when it comes to prices, why are farmers receiving so little money? Since the producer's price is apparently seen as the main issue, we may expect them to receive more money. For the time being, this will contribute to a difference of a few cents on the product.

• (1755)

[English]

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: I can assure you that the margins in the restaurant industry are a whole lot lower than they are for the average dairy farmer. If it is so advantageous for restaurants to have these items on their menu, why are they disappearing from the menus of restaurant operators? Why are they trying to find ways to offer a cheeseless pizza? Mozzarella is considered gold in the industry.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Once again, this is a situation where those prices —

[English]

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: Why is it being...?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: As farmers are subsidized in the United States, the prices are maintained there. They are not maintained here. If we eliminate supply management, prices will drop, but family farms will disappear. They will no longer be able to compete with the United States.

I would like to know how you can reconcile your demands and the existence of family farms.

[English]

The Chair: Can you reply very briefly, Ms. Reynolds? Then, Ms. Brisebois, you may want to comment on this.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Go ahead.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: We are all in favour of freer trade and fewer subsidies in all sectors. I think that's our major point. Although it isn't the government that subsidizes the dairy or poultry industry in Canada, consumers do, to the tune of billions of dollars. So there's definitely a subsidy program here.

To our mind, we need to have fewer subsidies and freer trade for all agriculture products.

The Chair: Do you want to comment briefly?

Okay. Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Van Kesteren, please.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you all for being here today.

Ms. Gouin, you have a very interesting submission. We all admire the work that your organization has done and we want to congratulate it on 100 years. Was it last year or this year?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: Big Brothers Big Sisters is celebrating 100 years next year.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Oh, you're older than that, aren't you?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: We, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, are older. We're 113.

• (1800)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Wow!

In your submission you talked about young people getting the skills they need to enter the workforce, including computer, communication, basic reading, and writing skills. You're absolutely right; I think everybody agrees.

I want you to tell us how the Skills Link, Career Focus, and Canada Summer Job programs have helped to improve the participants' employment levels. What results have you seen from youth who have participated in these programs? How many of them go on to post-secondary education or find higher levels of employment?

You also mentioned that your organization would like to see the Skills Link program enhanced. What enhancements would you like to see?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: Our hundred clubs are all independent. I don't have a full picture of everyone who has received funding from the Skills Link program. I know that clubs talk about it a lot.

As to the summer jobs programs, many of them rely on these programs. They train young people. For instance, the Winnipeg Boys and Girls Clubs run a summer learning program. They hire young people to work with the summer learning program and to help make sure that young people don't lose ground over the summer.

Young people who are living in neighbourhoods that have high levels of poverty lose ground, we know, during the summer. These young people are benefiting from the summer program. They are going to the local universities and studying in education, so this is supporting their learning as they go along. Most of them are in education training already, in teacher training. That's one example.

I'd have to check to see how many go on, but because we're a fixture in communities, because people know us, one thing they do is build relationships with the people in the clubs. We can offer more than just a job experience; we can offer a mentorship, a connection to their communities that can last for years over and beyond the employment programs.

Anecdotally, the Kingston Boys and Girls Club ran a Skills Link career program as well and have said that they are excited about running more.

So people are going on to post-secondary or employment, but I don't have any numbers for you.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: What about skills enhancement?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: I saw that there have been enhancements to these programs and a commitment to increasing it by \$50 million for two years. I'm wondering, after these two years, what the projects are for sustaining it at this level, because I don't think we'll be resolving the issue of youth employment. It would be great to resolve it in two years, but I suspect it'll take longer.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: You're looking for a continuation of the program.

Dr. Rachel Gouin: That would be a good start.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Okay.

Really, now that you've worked with the program, you have no suggestions with respect to something we could do a little bit better.

Dr. Rachel Gouin: Yes. I also saw that in the last call for proposals most of the funding was going to the career side. I want to make sure that we don't forget about the skills link. For sure there's a long way to go for those young people, but we need every one of them to be ready and employed.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: I don't have much time. I want to shift to the aboriginal side.

How can we better work with provinces and territories to ensure that all students, including aboriginals, have the information access they need to begin a post-secondary education? Is there something you see within your program that maybe can improve that? We all recognize that as an issue. Is there some direction you could give?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: I would encourage you to work with aboriginal organizations. I know the government already is. That is definitely the way to go.

Some of our clubs serve a high number of aboriginal kids. The Saddle Lake club is on a first nations reserve. The Winnipeg club has high levels of aboriginal youth who participate. Those are just two examples.

With respect to the programs we offer in some of these clubs, we have a partnership with Rogers, for instance, that allows us to provide education support throughout high school to make sure that they don't drop out and that they have post-secondary funding grants to pursue post-secondary education. It's called Rogers Raising the Grade. This is a partnership the Boys and Girls Clubs have established. Twenty-five of our clubs are involved.

Those are initiatives the private sector is getting involved in, and it is making a difference.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Van Kesteren.

We'll go to Mr. Marston, please.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Aiken, in 1974 I worked on the railway. I was a signal maintenance man. I had four people killed at one crossing in an 11-month period. To this day, 48 years later, I have a recurring dream, about once a month, that I'm explaining to my supervisor why I hadn't tested those crossings properly. So I think I have an understanding of PTSD. Back in those days, you didn't go to anybody for help. You never even thought in terms of that.

The government, as a whole, and all of us in this room, care about our troops. But I wonder if they really capture the sense of the seriousness of how many people in the military, both those still in and veterans, are suffering from this. We hear stories in Parliament all the time about cutbacks to services.

I'm going to ask how you would categorize the funding status today. Is it as we have known it for a number years? Is it less? Is it improving?

Dr. Alice Aiken: I think when we're looking specifically at mental health, funding for mental health treatment services within the military has improved. For veterans, it's the same as the rest of society, because 90% of them are in the rest of society. So I think that probably it hasn't improved for veterans.

Mr. Wayne Marston: How close to adequate would you call it?

Dr. Alice Aiken: Well, you know, it's interesting. From 1991 to 1998, we saw the first Gulf War, Rwanda, and Somalia. Very anecdotally, when I released from the forces in 1998, we were starting to see an upscale in operations that was unprecedented. In my last four years, just at the health care clinic I worked at, we saw a three-fold increase in mental health needs, and that has continued to increase and grow.

Mr. Wayne Marston: That was the point I was getting to. I had a very modest situation relative to what people saw and were involved with over there. The lasting effects are obvious in my case, and they went through a lot more for an extended period of stress.

Ms. Gouin, we've talked before. I'm a big supporter of the Kiwanis Boys and Girls Clubs in Hamilton East. In that part of Hamilton, we have a high level of high-risk young people, young adults. I'm a

supporter of education. You talked about education as being the way out. I negotiated a labour studies program with our community college. I related to your presentation, but I would suggest that the intervention that I see as the essential ingredient in the Boys and Girls Clubs is between getting out of school and when parents get home.

In your organization's on-the-ground view, what's the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing? We've had a fair amount of legislation in the last while, and some people believe that's how you address the problem of those at risk. Has this made your organization's work more difficult? If so, from a budgetary perspective, what recommendations could your organization make to us so that we could help you?

● (1805)

Dr. Rachel Gouin: I am not front line, so I can't speak to that, and I haven't heard clubs talking about the effect of the mandatory minimum. I have heard clubs talk a lot about the importance of prevention and the difference they can see it makes. The youth they see who are involved in gangs or in difficult situations most often are youth who have been traumatized. They've experienced violence in the home. Either they're born into a family that's already involved in gangs or they're living on the streets. They are victims we need to work with.

They see issues like homelessness, drug use in the home. They're strong believers in prevention. They see the path that is possible for young people if they have the support they need. That support is based on relationships, so there is a need for long-term investment in young people, not just in and out of communities.

The Chair: You have twenty seconds.

That's it?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Twenty seconds is...

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Marston.

Mr. Hoback, please.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for being here this evening.

I'm going to direct my questions to both the restaurant and retail sectors. I'm looking for assistance to help me understand. You talked about supply management and what the impact is on both your sectors. You can't see a consumer just going across the border for a jug of milk. It doesn't make sense to do that. Why would you say that's an issue in your sector? Can you explain that to me?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: It is indeed an issue. Indirectly in response to Monsieur Caron's question, the issue here is not the protection of farmers; the issue is that this year alone consumers will spend between \$15 billion and \$20 billion in cross-border shopping. You only need to go to Bellingham, just across from the B.C. border, and go to a certain retail store—I will not name it. There is even a Facebook page of American consumers who are angry because they can't get chicken or milk or butter because of the number of Canadians emptying the shelves.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, but the savings for those items are small. How would that impact a family? Can you give me an idea?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: In fact, chicken breast here is \$6.92. In that store in the U.S., it's \$3. I can tell you, sir, that impacts your budget if you have a family with young children. If you look at milk, it's the same: 92¢ to \$2.40. Those are everyday items, which is why that's the product we've seen most purchased. That's what affects everyone's budget the most.

Mr. Randy Hoback: So if you took those items and looked at an individual family or a low-income family, that's substantial enough for them to go through the hassle, wait at the border, and actually go across the line and buy it?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: Maybe because I'm obsessed with this, I've spent quite a bit of time at Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia borders. I've followed people in malls and asked them to show me what they've purchased and how often they do it. Sir, I was shocked.

Mr. Randy Hoback: To the restaurant association, again, milk and eggs are small ingredients. They're not going to have a huge impact on the price of food you're offering a customer, are they?

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: Well, you're talking about milk and eggs, but we're talking about poultry and cheese. Cheese is a really big one. In fact, there is a class of cheese just for pizza manufacturers, and it was necessary to give them their own class of cheese because of the concern that they would move south with their manufacturing facilities because the prices were so much cheaper. Fresh pizzerias don't have that option. They can't move south to avoid the high cost of dairy products, so they are stuck with prices that are 30% higher.

Absolutely, the biggest inputs for restaurants are food and labour, and quite frankly, the supply managed products make up a big portion of their food costs.

• (1810)

Mr. Randy Hoback: One of the other areas you talked about is fees, and credit card fees. I'm just kind of curious, and I'm looking for some input. We're using different types of purchasing mechanisms now. I went to a movie this weekend and bought the ticket online. I actually bought it on my Galaxy 3 phone. It was great. It was easy to do. I did it through PayPal.

Are you seeing new types of technologies such as that affecting your sector? What do you think we should be doing to embrace those technologies and create more competition with Visa in that area?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: I would say that generally restaurants and retailers embrace those new technologies. We're seeing PayPal play a huge role, especially with smaller retailers, because they bring all of the different transactions together and provide one cost. We're seeing that most people now, when they go to movies, will "tap and go" to

pay or they'll pay online. That's happening in stores and with fast food. That's very common.

I think what is most important for our businesses, when we look at the code of conduct, is just to make sure that when you're given an application on your phone—a wallet or "app" that allows you to pay—you are the one making the choice and not the bank that sent you the app, because we know the choice they'll make will be the most expensive one for the retailer.

Mr. Randy Hoback: I think I'll leave it there, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hoback.

[Translation]

Mr. Mai, the floor is yours.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

My question is for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada representative. I think a number of aspects of your brief are interesting. When representatives of Canada Without Poverty appeared before our committee, I asked them whether the government had kept its promise to eliminate child poverty in the year 2000. That was an old plan. We were told that the promise had definitely not been kept. Therefore, we can say that the government has not done its job.

Your brief also says that the government should set up a poverty reduction plan. Could you tell us a bit about that? What is happening and why has this problem not yet been resolved?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: We talked about that because Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is part of Campaign 2000. So we support the objective to eliminate poverty.

There are significant connections between poverty levels and educational achievement. It is very a well-known fact that, when students are less successful, they have more difficulty getting jobs, and the jobs they do get are insecure and less well-paid. We want to make sure that all our young people have every possible opportunity to participate in Canada's economy and to reach their full potential. That's why we have included this recommendation. It is largely due to the fact that we are a member of the coalition.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Okay. I just wanted to confirm that the issue has not yet been resolved and that there is still much work to be done in this area.

You also talk about the fact that we must do more to help aboriginal students and young people as far as education goes. You are not the only one to point that out. In fact, someone spoke to us about this just before you. Could you tell us about the objective? You were talking about making education more accessible. Could you elaborate on that, please?

Dr. Rachel Gouin: We included that issue because it's a big concern for us. There are major discrepancies between the educational achievements of young aboriginals and those of other Canadians. As members of an organization that serves that population, we are very concerned by this reality. Talking about it is an act of solidarity with aboriginal organizations working on making real changes. I encourage the committee to discuss this with them in order to obtain more details and find out how they would like to proceed.

• (1815)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Great. Thank you.

I want to continue discussing the topic my colleague, Mr. Marston, brought up.

When it comes to prevention, we often use Quebec's example regarding youth crime. We should invest more in prevention than in suppression. You say that, more specifically with regard to Bill C-10, this area is negatively affected. Could you explain to us in 10 seconds what else you would like us to do in prevention regarding—

Dr. Rachel Gouin: It's certain that, in the world we are living in, we need a little bit of everything. We would like to see more investments in prevention. Research shows that this approach is really worthwhile and is the appropriate choice in terms of the economy. Regarding Bill C-10, we are still asking for investments in prevention, as we have mentioned.

Mr. Hoang Mai: I only have one minute left.

[*English*]

Monsieur McBean, you mentioned the cost of climate change to society. You gave us alarming numbers. Can you tell us what more we should do in terms of investment to prevent these causes? I don't think we'll be able to prevent causes, but to actually acknowledge it and invest in it.

Dr. Gordon McBean: What we're proposing is strategies that actively undertake approaches to reduce our vulnerability. We've talked a lot—with my colleague next door here—about trauma. The evidence from the Montreal ice storm of 1998 is that children who lived through that, some of them in their mothers' wombs, are showing developmental difficulties, handicaps that will never be rectified.

The only way to rectify this kind of thing and to help children is through an active strategy of reducing risk. We need to be able to predict better when these events happen, and make the infrastructure so that power lines don't fall down, bridges don't collapse, and the sewers continue to run. That means an investment in a climate change weather disaster risk reduction strategy that we do not have in Canada—hardly at all.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Mai.

Mr. Carmichael please.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I have two questions, the first one to Madam Reynolds. Your submission to the committee outlined the importance of young workers in the restaurant and food service industry. Obviously, by the scale of your industry, it's significant. I am confident that many in this room had their first jobs in a restaurant or with food service. I know I did.

You go on to say that modernizing our immigration system with a bias toward youth will help face labour changes. I wonder if you could elaborate a bit on this. How do we effect that without impacting or disenfranchising more skilled workers coming into the country? Should we do a better job with schools and universities?

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: What we support in terms of the modernization of the immigration laws that are currently under way is a real emphasis on bringing in people to meet the needs of the labour market. Right now they're focused on highly skilled and semi-skilled workers. We also have unskilled positions that are going unfulfilled. What we like about the reforms is that there is a lot more emphasis on linking people wanting to immigrate with jobs. There's much more emphasis on Canadian work experience.

There's more likelihood that once people have come to Canada and have worked in a job, have already linked with an employer who is looking for those skills, and have become familiar with the work and become acclimatized in the community, they're more likely to stay, as opposed to a situation where skilled workers apply to come to the country and when they come in they have to find their own way.

In terms of the second part of your question, absolutely, we have to work more closely with community colleges and universities. Clearly, it's within the interest of the community colleges and universities to ensure that their graduates are successful in getting jobs. It's very important that we work with the community colleges, so they understand the labour market needs and are providing their students with the skills that are going to be meaningful when they graduate.

• (1820)

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you very much.

Madame Brisebois, one of my favourites was an issue—and you talk about it in your submission—with regard to Canada's need to develop a modern digital payment system. We will be unable to compete in the digital economy in the 21st century if we don't. I wonder if you could elaborate on how Canada's current payment system is restricting economic growth and/or hindering our true productivity. In this regard, what modernizations would you suggest we should be considering?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: There's a fantastic report that we'll make sure we circulate. It was prepared by the task force on payments, and it looks at the future of the digital economies, specifically from a payments perspective. There are different elements. One of them is what we discussed earlier, the technology that we're announcing online and that we're seeing in some of the stores or gas stations.

On other technologies, for example, Canada is behind, especially business to business when it comes to paying electronically. We are still processing way too many cheques.

On the study itself—and again we'll make sure you get a copy—the group has done extensive research and has looked at Australia, the U.K., and a few other countries that have invested heavily to ensure that in fact both government and business are transacting digitally.

Those are generally the areas. I don't have the specific numbers, but I'll make sure you get them.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Carmichael.

I'm going to take the last round here as the chair.

First of all, Dr. Aiken, I just wanted to briefly ask this. What types of partnerships do you have with institutions like the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton? Can you just give us an indication of the types of partnerships you have with these types of facilities?

Dr. Alice Aiken: Yes, absolutely.

We went in with a bottom-up approach, so we went in at the level of the researcher and clinician who would be working with military and veterans. When we were signing memoranda of understanding, we did that with the universities, but of course all of the rehabilitation institutes, like the Glenrose, work with us. They work with us by virtue of the U of A having signed the MOU. In fact, across the country to date, three research chairs have been stood up that will be there in perpetuity so that the research can continue.

One of them is Dr. Jackie Hebert, from the Glenrose. She's a physiatrist who works on the new computerized rehabilitation network, and she's one of our very prominent researchers, working right with veterans, getting them rehabilitated quickly. She's one of the top amputee researchers in the country.

The Chair: Is the \$50 million you're asking for actually for this network that goes across the country, in terms of the research?

Dr. Alice Aiken: Absolutely. As you can see from our handout, there are 26 universities, and it's growing.

The Chair: Okay. I just wanted to make sure I had that right.

I want to turn to Ms. Brisebois and the tariff issue she laid out very well in her notes.

Obviously, the challenge is that there's an awful lot of revenue raised on an annual basis from the tariff. You make your points very well. We've talked about this privately, but could you give us some guidance as to how you and your association would perhaps phase these out over a longer period of time, such that the fiscal costs to the government would be absorbed over a long-term period rather than over the short term?

Ms. Diane Brisebois: Yes, thank you.

In our submission to the Department of Finance in October, we have in fact identified key areas, specific products, where we would see an elimination or a phase-out. Those three categories have been

identified as being dealt with immediately because of the competitive nature of the product, but we've suggested that the others, which is a huge range of tariffs, as you know, be eliminated over a period of time, keeping in mind, Mr. Chairman, that the Department of Finance has told us that they would lose around \$700 million in revenue—

• (1825)

The Chair: Annually.

Ms. Diane Brisebois:—annually if they were to eliminate those tariffs. However, if you calculate that it's \$20 billion in cross-border shopping, no one needs to do the math to consider how much tax revenue we're losing. So to ensure that there's a level playing field and that retailers can be competitive, I think at the end of the day it will benefit both government and the economy.

The Chair: I appreciate that. I have two minutes left. I'm not sure I'm wise in doing this, but I'm going to jump into the supply management debate.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: For fun, I go out to Wainwright, where my dad is from, and my Uncle Charlie, who has dairy and poultry, and Uncle Robert, who has beef. If I want to see them fight, I just say, "What do you think of supply management?" The two of them go at each other like cats in a bag.

The reality is, if you look at Charlie's farm, a three-generation farm, it is true; it is a form of subsidy in some way by the consumer of these products. But I think you have to take the point that there would be some dislocation of an awful lot of producers like my uncle. If you take chickens, which, Ms. Reynolds, you used as the example, I don't see how that kind of family farm, which is fairly large, competes on economies of scale with the massive enterprises in the U.S. The prices would be lower for consumers, absolutely true, but I think you would have far fewer producers like that.

I think that's what we need to have in a supply management debate. Whether the country decides to change it or not, you are going to have some dislocation. It's not just a consumer issue; it is a producer issue as well.

Ms. Joyce Reynolds: That's the reason in our brief we say we can't put our head in the sand and hide from these issues. Canada is trying to negotiate a European trade agreement. Canada is trying to negotiate a Pacific Rim trade agreement. Wouldn't we rather, as a nation, work on solutions and come up with something now, as opposed to having something imposed on us later on?

I think there's a real opportunity to say that you've got interested industries that want to be part of the solution and to work with these sectors to try to come up with solutions so that the displacement is minimized. That's what we're asking for.

The Chair: I appreciate that. My time is up. It's a very large debate. We'll have to get into it later with the experts, such as Mr. Hoback and Monsieur Caron.

I do want to thank all of you for presenting and responding to our questions on the issues. It was a very interesting panel.

I do want to apologize for the temperature in this room. We've had many complaints about the cold temperature here, so I'm going to

put it on the record as the finance chair: could someone at Public Works please fix the temperature in this room? I've had multiple complaints from colleagues and witnesses, and hopefully we will have it fixed.

Thank you all for appearing today.

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