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Chair

The Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone.

We're so pleased to have our first department coming to talk about our new study, community capacity building.

Before we get started, I just want to recognize the leadership and willingness to work with the committee. I sincerely thank them on behalf of the clerk and the administrative team. We really appreciate it. It turned out that our schedule was tight, and you came forward. Thank you very much.

Truth and reconciliation is a process—200 years of apartheid doesn't get turned around easily. Canadians are curious and feel responsible, I find, which is the beginning step of understanding truth. It's not only a formality, especially in this committee, but a necessity to recognize that we're on the non-surrendered land of the Algonquin people. We appreciate that they worked with us—those who are settlers.

Now, we are pleased to have you. Since you're the queen, we can be flexible. We're not going to worry too much about time. Take your time, present what you like, and the MPs will of course have opportunities for questions.

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

[English]

Go ahead when you're ready.

Ms. Karen Campbell (Director, Program Policy Division, Indigenous Affairs Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for having us today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin people, where we have the privilege to live and work.

I'm Karen Campbell, the Acting Director General of the Indigenous Affairs Directorate at the skills and employment branch, ESDC. I'm joined today by my colleague Jean-Pierre Gauthier, the Director General of the Indigenous Programs Directorate in the program operations branch. Together, our groups are responsible for policy design and coordination of delivery of ESDC's indigenous labour market programs. We're pleased to provide you information today on these programs and their impacts, particularly those related

to human resource development and capacity in first nations communities.

Since 2010, ESDC has funded 84 indigenous organizations, with more than 600 points of service, to deliver employment and skills training under the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy. We call it the ASETS. ASETS invested \$292 million annually, with one-time increases provided in 2016-17 and 2017-18. Specifically for first nations, ASETS funded 66 service delivery organizations, with over \$188 million annually to provide services to individuals living in first nations communities, as well as those in urban and rural centres.

First nations organizations offer a wide range of training and employment services, from life skills and employment counselling to supporting post-secondary education. An assessment is made based on the needs of the client weighed against available resources and opportunities for success.

Through these investments, around 319,000 first nations clients have received employment and skills training. Of these, following their participation, almost 101,000 were employed and 4,500 returned to school.

In 2016 and 2017, ESDC undertook extensive engagement on the future of indigenous labour market programming to fully understand the strengths of the current approach and what needed to be improved.

We heard that new funding was needed, since organizations were continuing to work with budgets set decades ago, in the face of growing demographics and increased costs of doing business in a rapid technological change.

We heard that organizations wanted longer-term agreements with greater flexibility to provide wraparound supports; to address and remove barriers to participating in or completing training for those further from the labour market; a need for increased ability to support youth through transitions to prepare them well in advance for participation in the labour market; a greater role for leadership and priority setting, including moving to a distinctions-based approach to labour market programming; and recognition and reflection of the success of clients and organizations across the skills continuum, and not just looking at jobs found or entry to labour market as the success of the program.

The new indigenous skills and employment training program, or the ISET program, captures and reflects what we heard and builds on the strong foundation of the ASETS. It will invest \$2 billion over five years and over \$400 million per year ongoing, ensuring new and sustainable funding to indigenous organizations to help close the skills and employment gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The new ISET program will be in place on April 1, 2019, in a few short weeks, following extensive work this past year to co-develop implementation with indigenous partners.

The ISET program recognizes and introduces distinctions-based funding streams, to recognize the unique needs of first nations, the Métis Nation, Inuit, and urban and non-affiliated indigenous peoples, as well as their different labour market conditions. The first nations funding stream specifically received \$101 billion over five years and \$235.7 million ongoing.

• (0850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier (Director General, Indigenous Programs Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): I'm going to continue, if I may.

Good morning. I'm pleased to be here today.

I'd like to begin by sharing some policy directions and facts with you. Through your questions, obviously, we'll be able to provide more detailed information on different subjects, depending on where your interests lie and what you'd like to know.

One of our main goals is to refocus the department's approach away from risk and administrative tracking and on organizational capacity, to help build that capacity and promote results as opposed to day-to-day transactions.

With that in mind, we are working very closely with the communities. I think how we work is a crucial component in building a new relationship with indigenous organizations and communities, and over the past two years, we've deployed significant efforts to that end.

We will be carrying out a joint evaluation of each organization, looking at their management model, structure and capacity to achieve desired outcomes for clients. That way, we will be able to properly identify where they are in their development. The process will enable us to focus more energy on the long-term goal of building community and organizational capacity to better serve clientele.

Consequently, we want to remain engaged with our indigenous partners to understand their needs, realities and challenges, while doing everything we can to support their organizations and build their capacity. I believe that fits into the study the committee is undertaking today.

[*English*]

In collaboration with indigenous partners, the department is co-developing a performance measurement strategy. Again, it's in the same spirit of reaching out and making sure we do it together as opposed to us doing it to them. It will basically rely on robust

program data, which we currently have. It will also need to rely on jointly determined research, jointly because they have their own interests and they, too, are accountable in many ways to their communities. It speaks both to their interests and to ours to make sure that we have a good performance measurement strategy.

This includes, among many things—and I think you've heard of it already in a previous appearance—the labour market information pilot with first nations that the department is conducting. We can provide more information if the committee wants to spend more time on this. We have more information updates for you if that's an area you'd like to explore more.

Collecting data, research and doing the analysis will therefore support both the communities and us in terms of identifying our success, our gaps, the areas where we can do better and where we can improve—we are all of us: the organizations, us, the communities—and also in terms of being able to report back to places like here about the success and the achievements of the program, of these investments.

We also have another program that I want to touch on very briefly. You may know the skills and partnership fund. It's a slightly different program from ASETS, but it's very related. Actually, the two are very much complementary. From that perspective, I think it's interesting.

The fund is a demand-driven and proposal-based process, as opposed to ASETS, which is a partnership with an established network of organizations. It focuses, as well, on training for the labour market. It puts emphasis on establishing partnerships, so it has a little bit of a reaching out type of a spin to it to try to make sure that the organizations establish good partnerships that make sense for the communities at the local level and, again, with an objective and a target. That's where the two programs are complementary because they are aligned with the same overall objectives of skills development, job training, and supporting employment and access to the labour market. Ultimately, the two instruments are working very much together.

• (0855)

The fund was launched in 2010. It has about \$50 million per year. We've basically managed to leverage \$150 million from 2010-17 through the partnership side of it, so that basically is pushing further the public investment on the SPF. We see about 450 partners in the private sector, and other organizations as well, that have been fostered by this program. We're very happy about this.

It is based on a call for proposals. The last one was done in 2016-17. We have a series of projects currently at play for five years. We're monitoring their progress. We're getting information on their achievements to date. We'll basically look at how we move forward with that program, in about a year or two from now, as we approach the end of this five-year cycle, which is aimed roughly at March 31, 2021. I say "roughly" because not all projects are the same, but the timeline was March 31, 2021.

To date, according to the information we have, the fund has allowed 32,000 people to be served, 14,000 to actually find jobs and about 2,000 people to go back to school using those projects and partnerships.

That gives you a bit of an overview of a second program that will also, I think, be interesting for the committee to study.

We'll stop here and open it up to your questions. We'll do our very best to provide all the information that could be useful to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll open with a round of seven minutes per member, per party. Then we'll move to five minutes. We'll continue for the full hour.

We'll open the question period with member Mike Bossio.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both very much for being here today. We really appreciate it.

Your organization is pivotal to the future success of young indigenous people realizing their dreams and their careers. I think we all want to try to ensure that we maximize the potential of our indigenous youth.

In some of the questions I'm going to ask, I'm going to try to be as diplomatic as I can. This program has not been overly successful in the past, from what I can see and given what the Auditor General had to say in his last report. I know there are changes being made, but I'm most curious as to what we're doing to ensure that this becomes indigenous-driven, indigenous-created and indigenous-led.

I guess my first question would be: What percentage of the staff leading this program today at ESDC is indigenous?

• (0900)

Ms. Karen Campbell: That's a good question. There are myriad. Our two groups work on the national policy and program design. There are also throughout Canada, Service Canada employees who work with indigenous organizations on this program. I don't know the percentage, but I can find that out for you.

I think it's important to understand this program: Since 1999, the fundamental design and delivery of employment and training programs has been undertaken by indigenous organizations. It's been a hallmark and a unique aspect of this program, unique in federal grants and contributions programs. It really sets the tenor for how the delivery happens on the ground.

That is even more the case going forward. We've been working directly with indigenous organizations—with leadership and with those who deliver services—to fully co-develop the parameters going forward, to co-develop the terms and conditions for the program. They have gone through and co-developed the template for the contribution agreements. It's still a contribution program under the transfer payment policy, but we're moving those markers as far as possible to ensure that indigenous organizations and representatives can determine how that will look.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Are all of the 450 partners you have in the private sector indigenous?

Ms. Karen Campbell: The private sector partners.... Fundamental to the skills and partnership fund is the need to work with indigenous organizations. The training and those pieces are done by indigenous organizations. Those private sector partners are industry, social enterprise.... They themselves are not necessarily indigenous. The key to that program is that it's delivered by indigenous organizations for indigenous peoples and that they're linking with private sector partners.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Are we working towards ensuring—scouring to try to find—that those private entities are indigenous?

Ms. Karen Campbell: That program is opportunity based and looking to fill human resource needs in emerging sectors and ensure that indigenous peoples have the opportunity to fully participate in the economy, particularly around where they live. Many resource development projects often take place in traditional territories, but those individuals who live in those territories haven't had access to those opportunities. In part, that program is to bridge those gaps and ensure they have the ability to be fully trained to participate in those opportunities.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Everywhere I go within indigenous communities, other than my own, thankfully.... The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte have a very strong governance and institutional structure, so they deliver most of the programs directly by their own people. However, the vast majority of indigenous communities don't do that.

Last night, I was at a youth conference here in town. There were five indigenous youth from Attawapiskat, who were there with their teacher. Their teacher was from Belleville, from my riding. I couldn't believe that he was all the way up in Attawapiskat as a teacher. I asked him whether he was finally seeing other indigenous teachers coming to the fore in the school. He said that they have eight teachers in the high school and they're all from away. He said he was in the elementary school before that, and all the teachers were from outside the community. There was not one single individual from their community teaching their own youth.

This is a recurring problem. We see it over and over again. I don't see that we're breaking down the barriers on this. In the south, we seem to be able to find that ability, but in a lot of our northern and remote communities, we're not finding that strength. You have members who used to sit here, such as Michael McLeod, who talked about how when they finished school, they'd have to go back to school for two years before they could go south to a post-secondary institution.

My question goes back—and the AG spoke about this—to how we can do better in ensuring that we're bringing in all those capacity needs within our indigenous communities. How can we raise them up so that they are delivering to their own communities?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I can perhaps provide some insight as to our approach there.

We're very much reaching out to work with people living in the communities, because they are probably better placed to identify what makes more sense to them. We're trying to empower them and support them in looking for solutions for those questions.

That's where the partnerships come in. As Karen was explaining, they look around and see projects going on, in terms of the jobs in the new mine being set up and so forth—whatever happens around them—and they want in.

The idea for us in terms of an approach is to be very mindful of the issue, but—

• (0905)

Mr. Mike Bossio: I'm sorry to cut you off. I apologize.

There is one area that I want to explore. One of the best examples I have seen of indigenous-driven, indigenous-led programs is the First Nations Financial Management Board. They have 326 different indigenous communities that have partnered into that. They're providing the training, governance structure, financial structure and the administrative structure, which most of these communities are now following.

What other examples are you finding out there that are like the First Nations Financial Management Board? Are you involved with the First Nations Financial Management Board, and are you trying to propagate that model in other areas?

Ms. Karen Campbell: Fundamental to the new approach under the indigenous skills and employment training program is the move to what we're calling a distinctions-based approach. There are separate funding streams for distinctions. Part of the proposal for that, based on our engagement for a number of years with indigenous partners, is that not only will the first nations labour market strategy be delivered entirely by first nations organizations, as is currently the case, but also the broader strategic parameters will be set through their own structures, through leadership and through common purpose around setting those priorities.

We have a 10-year program which we're looking at really advancing over those 10 years to greater and greater autonomy, and looking to transferring program authority where we can. We're doing that with self-governing first nations right now.

Under this program, we're now able to transfer funds directly through their fiscal finance agreements with ISC or with CIRNA, which we were never able to do before. It's really respecting those governance arrangements in a unique way.

Mr. Mike Bossio: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Questioning now moves to MP Kevin Waugh, from the great province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): That's right: Saskatchewan.

The Chair: We still welcome an amalgamation.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: There you go.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, departmental officials. You're the first of seven that we expect to see. Mr. Gauthier and Ms. Campbell, I thank both of you for coming.

You know what the Auditor General said. I'm not going to pick away at it, but obviously we have not done a very good job. The current government has thrown \$2 billion more at it, as we've seen.

I'm just going through your numbers, Ms. Campbell. We have 319,000 clients and we employed 101,000. We don't have a tracking system. Are they employed for a month or for a year, or are they still employed?

That was part of what was from the Office of the Auditor General, that we don't have a tracking system. With this plan and this \$2 billion over five years that you're going to get, is that the first thing we can address? You had 218,000 out of this program unemployed, and yes, it was nice to see 4,500 returning to school, but we still had 213,500 who were unemployed out of your number of 319,000.

I think that is the first thing. Do we have tracking? Are we going to once and for all track employment in your department?

Ms. Karen Campbell: Thank you for your question.

We take the recommendations and observations of the Auditor General very seriously. Moving forward, we're building on our program data. This is the information that we receive from all of the indigenous organizations that provide the services across the country, and we're working through other administratively held data of the government, building ways so that we can get a better picture of those employment outcomes on a longer term. It's something that, respecting privacy laws and all of these other pieces, we've been able to do.

We had done some preliminary work on this that the Auditor General was able to see and review but, because it was preliminary, felt it hadn't gone far enough. We're really building on that and looking at those recommendations and seeing how we can have that kind of information around our program and its impacts going forward.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: He was very critical. I think this is something that all politicians and all Canadians are concerned about. Just throwing money at a program is no good. It's absolutely no good. You have to have a tracking base. He sat here and talked about that, so hopefully your department and other departments heard the message loud and clear from the Auditor General and will look after that.

In my province, I know that the problem with this program, to be honest with you, is that sometimes, as my colleague Mr. Bossio pointed out, it is southern driven. Also, projects that could go to the north aren't in the north. I'll give you a couple of examples.

One is building homes in southern Saskatchewan and moving them to northern Saskatchewan. Could we not do a better job in our skills training whereby those homes actually would be built in northern Saskatchewan? Up there, they know the weather conditions and they know what's needed. Often we have seen flawed homes. They're built in southern Saskatchewan and they're just ready-to-move homes. They move them up north to reserves and so on.

It's good that we have that, but at the same time, there's no skills development on reserve. We have it in the Saskatoon public school system. In our schools, we build homes and then move them out to Whitecap, a reserve. It's an urban situation, which is good, but you know what I'm saying. We need more hands-on reserve training, if you don't mind me saying that. Are there any kinds of examples in northern Canada where that could be happening that you can share with me?

• (0910)

Ms. Karen Campbell: Certainly. Those kinds of projects in fact have been supported through the existing ASETS program.

I'm thinking of some projects in northern Ontario, for example. Water first was a project that worked within communities to build capacity for water treatment engineers, and throughout the entire life cycle of that process, ensuring that there were those competencies and skills within the community amongst community members to take care of their water systems and to ensure they are safe and running.

There are a number of projects under way that are focused just on that, on housing and those skills for building and for trades and apprenticeships, so people can have transferable skills and tickets that they can work with in their own communities and can support other communities through those.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Good.

Mr. Bossio was talking about 450 partners. Are we tracking those? Sometimes partnerships can happen, and we all love partnerships, but I've seen partnerships that last six months, and whatever happened happened, and we don't have a reporting mechanism to go back and say, "This is what happened. This company decided not to go forward."

Mr. Gauthier, you've talked about that.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We are tracking all of the projects we're funding. That includes all the partnerships. Partnerships, however, let's keep in mind, are actually between the indigenous community and the promoter or the mine or whatever it is that you have taking place. But we are definitely monitoring, through the reporting they provide to us, how the project is developing and evolving over time.

Partnerships will vary in scope, as we can all imagine. Some of them will have longer tenures, will last longer. They will establish a basis going forward. A mine can be in operation for decades, but if you're dealing with something that's more limited in time, the partnership will be for that moment. At least they can get access to some of those jobs, whereas right now, in some cases, they don't even have access to those jobs, because everything comes from the south, as we were saying.

We're trying to support, through the projects that are funded but also through the trade training that's getting done in the asset network, and trying to provide opportunities for at least some of the members of those indigenous communities to access some of those jobs as much as we can.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I know this study is about capacity building and retention of talent. What is the capacity of your department? Now that you have an extra \$2 billion, what will be the capacity of

your department to head out to our most vulnerable people who are looking for jobs, our aboriginal population?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Basically, we're trying to make sure that they have the capacity to address the issues, as opposed to us. We want to enable them and support them, as opposed to doing it locally for them. Most of the funding we're talking about, the vast majority, is actually going out of the department into the indigenous organizations that are providing the training and trying to support some more projects when we have the next round of proposals coming forward.

What we're doing, in essence, is making sure that they have the capacity internally to actually develop those opportunities by themselves.

• (0915)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Do they have the capacity? Do you know?

The Chair: Sorry, MP Waugh, but you are out of time.

We're moving to MP Jenny Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the officials for their presentation.

This study is about capacity building and retention. I know from reading the information and from your presentation, that there's a focus on youth in particular. I also wonder whether or not with the programming there is a focus for people who may be beyond the age 30 limit, people who are perhaps more established in the communities but who could use support in building their capacity and skills training.

Ms. Karen Campbell: Yes. Under the new program, we've really worked with indigenous partners to ensure there's that maximum flexibility so they can address their local labour market needs. We have made sure that there's greater flexibility to work with youth. There's no age restriction. These are meant to be complementary supports around staying in school and supporting their learning throughout so that all the systems in communities can work better together. As well, organizations are able to work with existing people in the community who may or may not be employed already and who need to improve their skills to move into new roles, for instance, in community governance or to take advantage of opportunities, and so we are ensuring that that full spectrum of human capacity, of human capital, in communities, can be supported.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: On the issue around retention, what specific programming is in place to help retain skilled individuals in the communities so that they can remain part of that community for the longer term?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: That's a very good question. The programs we're talking about are designed to help people access the labour market. They're not designed so much to help communities to retain people in their communities. It's a valid consideration and we're actually looking forward to the work with communities, because that's an important question. But we're very much focused on providing training and support for people to gain access to the market, to start at least with this.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I would think that retention is going to be really important, especially for the more rural and remote communities. As you build the capacity and as people have that capacity if they leave that community, then you're always chasing after the dog, so to speak. Engaging with the local communities to see what work needs to be done and how to do that work most effectively I would think is an important goal as well.

I come from an urban setting where all kinds of people have tremendous challenges as well. There are many levels to skills training. I'm curious to know what level of skills training, including life skills, is provided in the programming. To what extent is that provided? Again, the idea is to meet the needs of the local community as opposed to how we define what that might be.

Can you expand on that issue of life skills training?

Ms. Karen Campbell: Absolutely. The organizations from the program have the flexibility to provide a full suite of training, including life skills, essential skills, and in some cases some of those pre, pre-skills which are very fundamental and foundational, for people who are very far from the labour market. The new program allows time with 10-year agreements in additional funding where they can take individuals who require multi-year multiple interventions to move along. As well, they are able to provide what we call wraparound supports, whether these be referrals or specific pieces that are required to help individuals to complete their training and then engage in the labour market.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Do you fund bringing people from outside the community into rural and remote communities to provide the training? Those communities may not have the necessary resources in place there. This way you could enhance their training but also bring in outside resources.

• (0920)

Ms. Karen Campbell: That is up to the organizations themselves. Whether training resources or others, it is eligible if they find they are able to bring them into the community. The flexibility is there for organizations to design their training as they need to. Typically many organizations find it far more useful to bring people into the community to be able to provide training like that on site than to send people away. It's more disruptive to have to move, and it's often more costly. They look at these opportunities and will bring in people to provide training in communities.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Of the additional money going into ISET can you advise how much is expected to go directly to community-based service providers?

Ms. Karen Campbell: The numbers I gave are all the grants and contributions money and that's all to organizations. That is not the department's money.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I see. So none of that money will be used for ESDC internally.

Ms. Karen Campbell: No. Those are the grants and contributions envelopes that go to indigenous organizations to provide employment and skills training.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I see.

Is any amount of those funds being leveraged with other levels of government, for example, or is there a matching component from,

let's say, an employer who gets into the programming and the employer provides a certain contribution in payments to the trainee? Is there any such requirement?

Ms. Karen Campbell: Under the ISET program there is not a requirement. However, the majority of organizations are very skilled at ensuring they have that continuum across the board so they're able to find them. Under the skills and partnership fund there is a requirement for resources, whether direct investments or any kind of support to learners. That's one of the distinctions between the programs and the way they work.

The Chair: You have about 15 seconds.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair: You'll get another round.

We now move to MP Will Amos.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Gauthier and Ms. Campbell. We appreciate your being here today, since you were the only officials who could make it.

As you know, the riding of Pontiac is on Algonquin land, so I'm going to frame my questions in a way I think the Algonquin people would want me to.

[*English*]

Can you explain? When I'm looking at these two programs, the skills and partnership fund and the indigenous skills and employment training program, why is it that the department runs these? I feel as though the band council of Kitigan Zibi would say, "Just give us the money. We will train, thank you very much. We will retain, thank you very much. We will capacity build, thank you very much." Why is it that it's done out of Ottawa?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: If I can, it's not necessarily done out of Ottawa.

Basically we provide the funding locally to organizations. Your community probably does have currently a service provider that is indigenous. It's probably APNQL serving them, providing service in terms of skills development and employment training. We're basically providing support to various organizations that offer services to different communities.

Communities do have the ability to come to us and say they would like to do it themselves. We are very open to setting up agreements directly with different communities, if that's what they wish to do.

It's much more being supportive and providing them the means to actually do it. It's developing their capacity as opposed to the department's capacity that we're talking about here.

Mr. William Amos: That's helpful to understand. I appreciate that.

Could I request that information be provided to this committee, just by way of example—I think it would be an interesting case study—so that we can find out what the community of Kitigan Zibi has in the way of a partnership?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Sure.

Mr. William Amos: Who are they working with? What is the funding that has flowed through them? If we can go back maybe 10 years, that will help to provide a bit of perspective on what the flows have been.

To go to the Auditor General's report, how does working with partners who are off-site, not within the civil service, create or not create challenges that were underscored by the Auditor General when he said that there were insufficient mechanisms to track and there wasn't the data necessary in order to evaluate success or lack thereof?

● (0925)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The program data is provided by the organizations that you're talking about. They provide to us every quarter an update as to how many people they served and so forth, so we do have that data.

What we're lacking—and it's what the Auditor General was saying—is our ability to track people to see how they are progressing along the spectrum, which is much harder to do, by any measure. But we are getting information from them and we compile that. That's how we can have the stats and numbers we use and that we talked about.

We're working with them, trying to see how we can do better in terms of performance management, and measuring how much of a difference the program actually makes in terms of its results. That work is shaping up with them to actually develop the framework that will allow us to move forward on this.

The challenges are big, but we'll see how far we can push it. We need to do better. We all know that. We all want that. It's going to improve, but that work is currently ongoing.

Mr. William Amos: In the redesign of the programming around indigenous skills and employment training, what were the top three criticisms of the previous program that led to the reformulation?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Go for it.

Ms. Karen Campbell: What we heard repeatedly.... I can do our top three pretty handily, I think.

Number one was the need for increased resources. The program was built on a foundation that had been put in place in 1999, and those were the resources that continued over time, as I said earlier, in the face of growing demographics and economic changes. Organizations were continuing, in fact, to achieve fantastic results with the same funding they've always had. That was number one that we heard.

Number two was around the amount and the relationship with the department, and the kind of oversight that was being brought to organizations, which was a heavy focus on tracking of expenditures in a pretty detailed way as opposed to looking more broadly at the kinds of results that were being brought by organizations. That's the transformation we're looking at.

Of course, we are all accountable for public funds. The department has in place those kinds of accountability measures, as do organizations that deliver this program, and we would never say any different. But really, we're trying to focus on how best those public funds are used to deliver these results, and that's a change going forward.

Number three, if I had to pick number three, was around the flexibility to provide those kinds of needed supports to the most vulnerable of individuals as they try to access skills and enter the labour market.

Mr. William Amos: Okay.

Were there any criticisms? Fast forward to 2019 and all programs are now going through a gender-based analysis lens. What transformations has the training program gone through pursuant to that GBA analysis?

Ms. Karen Campbell: That's a wonderful question.

We've done analysis on clients served and employment outcomes through the program. Typically, clients served have gender parity. That's what that looks like. However, we do know that there is a slight difference and it's not as large as it is for non-indigenous peoples, but there is still a slight difference, with indigenous women having a lower rate of employment following the program than indigenous men. That's something we're looking at with organizations. As I said, they deliver the program and they do that priority setting. What we believe is that the ability to provide additional supports and wraparound services will be something that can start to address that.

Mr. William Amos: Thank you very much. I appreciate you following up with that additional information.

The Chair: Thank you.

The questioning now moves to MP Cathy McLeod.

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

How many ISET-ASETS holders do you have?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Eighty-five.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Eight-five. For example, for my riding, would I be able to get the actual contract?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Sure.

Ms. Karen Campbell: Their contribution agreement?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: That would be great, if you could submit it to the clerk.

I know the ASETS holder in my community is sort of a combination. It's more the tribal council, as opposed to individual bands. Within the contribution agreement, what mechanisms are there where they are required to report to the communities?

Let's say there are 17 bands. The ISET-ASETS holder is a tribal council. How can a band member know? For example, I know that sometimes there are contributions to day care that are part of the agreement. If I were a band member of Tk'emlúps, am I going to be in the contribution agreement? Is there a requirement for the holder to publicly report to all the members that should be benefiting from it?

● (0930)

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The reporting provisions we have in the agreement are essentially to govern the agreement itself, so it's reporting back to us, in terms of being able to account for the program. However, we are definitely paying attention to the governance structure, who is on their board and how the committees are associated with them. This is done more at the working level, just making sure that the discussion takes place and that the connections are established. We are well aware of most organizations and how they interact with their communities. Again, if a community is not necessarily satisfied, they can definitely approach a service provider, and we are approachable as well, if there is a need to.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Within your contribution agreement, is there no requirement for the holder to, in a public way, report to the people that are the recipients of the funds?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: No, there is not.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I think that is a concern because how can communities hold their leadership to account? They can't ask questions, if they don't know what the information is. If they don't know that day care spaces are part of—if I'm doing training in *x* and maybe I should have some ability to have day care spaces. To me, that is just the transparency of the holders to the communities that they serve. If there is nothing put in, I think that's a real gap and a disservice to the community members that are being served by these agreements.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: I agree with you that this is an important aspect of the relationship. They need to be connected and to report back and be accountable to the communities. What we find a bit difficult to articulate is—and we need to think more about this; I will agree with you—is it the role of Canada to go in and tell them how to organize and report back to one another? I think it's a bit of a dicey issue for us.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I think there is a requirement to publicly report millions of dollars in a contribution agreement. It's not Canada being patriarchal; it's Canada just saying that we want to ensure that the community members have the skills and opportunities to understand how the dollars flow. That is one sentence and then how the communities decide to—maybe it's a public meeting once a year or whatever format it takes, but the requirement that you're getting—I don't know, what's the biggest one? Is it \$280 million? What's the biggest contribution agreement you have?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Oh boy, you have me there. I would need to get back to you to give you an example for that.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: You have people getting millions and millions of dollars, and there's nothing that a community member is going to know in terms of what is happening. That's number one.

My next point, and I think it's an important issue, is that someone mentioned urban.... I never knew ISET holders could be urban.

Ms. Karen Campbell: In fact, since under the AHRDS, starting in 1999, we've had urban services organizations. They've been supported throughout. In the move to a distinctions-based approach, we needed to ensure that there continued to be a mechanism for supporting these independent urban organizations, so a fourth stream was created, an urban, non-affiliated indigenous peoples funding stream.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I think, in follow-up to Mr. Amos, information on who the 84 holders are would be valuable to submit to the clerk.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Sure.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: I think the Auditor General did note also that you couldn't demonstrate that the funding is being based on current needs.

I think one is current needs, but I think there's also capacity to....

The Chair: You've run out of time, so you'll have to be done.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're all rivetted with the question.

● (0935)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Madam Chair, could I just get clarification on....

The Chair: I'm sorry. We have a speaking order. I can try to put you on.

Mr. Dan Vandal: It will be five seconds.

The Chair: I believe the next speaker is MP Yves Robillard.

If you wish to share....

[Translation]

Mr. Dan Vandal: It'll take no more than five seconds. I have one quick question.

[English]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Yes.

Mr. Dan Vandal: I just want clarity on the number of ASETS holders there are.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: There are 85.

Mr. Dan Vandal: There are 85. I just wanted to make sure I heard that right.

[Translation]

Thank you.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you very much for meeting with us today.

How will the indigenous skills and employment training program differ from its predecessor when it comes to securing higher-quality better-paying jobs?

[English]

Ms. Karen Campbell: The intention behind the new program is to provide additional resources and the ability to support individuals—both the furthest from the labour market and those who are engaged in the labour market—who require additional skills. I think that's really important in communities in particular where it supports building that human capacity for governance and other key jobs. Through those mechanisms, then, it's ensuring that individuals aren't simply being trained to a certain standard to enter the labour market and then receive no further support to improve their skills throughout and then obtain better and higher paying jobs.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: In the past, our committee has heard about the challenge indigenous communities have retaining professional talent post-training. Will the indigenous skills and employment training program help with that, and if so, how?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: The program, launching soon—April 1—covers a period of 10 years and gives service providers much more flexibility. It will be possible to intervene multiple times and thus deliver locally tailored services to clients on an ongoing basis. This will help clients retain, and even strengthen, their knowledge, skills and certification year after year.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Can you tell the committee how the new program will help change the relationship between the department and the indigenous organizations responsible for service delivery?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: For a few years now, the department has been working to really strengthen relationships and co-operation with indigenous organizations. From the terms and conditions of the contribution agreements, the program was designed in a way that recognizes the organizations have considerable flexibility and autonomy.

We've begun building a new relationship in which the department supports the efforts deployed by communities for communities. The new program is designed to continue that relationship, and we'll see where it takes us. Eventually, it might even be possible for the department to withdraw completely from the program—if that were the will of the government, of course—but we aren't there yet.

For the time being, we are helping service providers build their capacity to deliver the services, making sure they have the resources they need through the available funding, and ensuring they have tools like the flexibility I talked about. That way, they will be able to provide service and adapt to local realities.

[English]

The Chair: Next is MP Arnold Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our guests for being here.

I'm going to take a bit of a different tack. I found that the Auditor General was a little harsh on you. From where I come I know a number of the organizations that you fund very well, such as the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council and the Rupertsland Institute. They do great work.

I don't think the entirety of their funding comes from your organization; they are able to get funding from a number of sources. I know that the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, for example, gets provincial education funding, and they mix that funding with the funding they get from you. There's apprenticeship funding that they get from the province, and they also use funding that comes from you for that purpose.

Do the two organizations which I mentioned represent the norm? Would you say that the experience you have across the country is similar to that with those organizations?

I can understand why there isn't clear reporting, because by the time the funds reach Kee Tas Kee Now, they are mixed. They get funds from their local band council, from the province and from the federal government, and it becomes mixed around. They'll take funding from a local university that they...

Is that kind of story common across the country?

● (0940)

Ms. Karen Campbell: The two organizations you mentioned are high capacity, well functioning. I would say this is similar to what we see across the country. The strength of this program is in the organizations that design and deliver the programming, with whom we've had strong partnerships for decades.

I want to quickly point out that the Auditor General didn't speak about financial reporting at all.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Oh, okay.

Ms. Karen Campbell: The Auditor General was talking about results reporting and what the department did with those results. I don't want the impression that it was about their financial reporting, because that's very much a different accountability structure.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Yes, I can see how difficult it is to say that this dollar went in and here is what result came from it. I can see, when it all becomes mixed around, how hard it is to tie the two things together.

There is another thing I'd be interested in knowing, particularly in the case of Rupertsland, which is a very interesting organization. One thing I've had a bit of feedback on from a number of people is that they've had an agreement with Rupertsland.... It's as though they're an apprentice, and Rupertsland says it will cover their tuition and your books.

That happens the first time they go, but it's a four-year program—you go for two months out of the year. The first time everything works fine, but then they seem to become lost in the system, and in the second, third and fourth years the funding doesn't come around again. When they go in, Rupertsland says, “We're not sure. It's a new person; something has changed.”

Is there an appeal process that these individuals can go through? Can they appeal to your organization saying they received an email from Rupertsland saying they would cover tuition and books for all four years, and they covered it for the first year, but they've been having trouble with the second, third and fourth years?

Is there an appeals process of any sort?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We sometimes get cases such as this brought to our attention. Issues in terms of tuition is one that I remember we had as well. It was something similar.

We will inquire, but it's not the kind of relationship that we have. We're not sitting in appeal of their decision.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Is there no appeal process?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: We can engage, ask questions and reach out to try to facilitate, but we're not at a decision-making level, at the end of the day. We won't reverse the decision. We just try to make sure that what needs to be done gets done. If it's just a matter of people having to transmit the file over again and so forth, sometimes by just asking questions you resolve the issue.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: The Kee Tas Kee Now are involved in everything from pre-kindergarten stuff all the way to...I think one of their students is going to Harvard right now. It's the whole gamut all the way through.

Is that typical? Do the funds provided by the ISET end up in the day care and the preschool stuff, or would you be funding the guy going to Harvard as well?

Ms. Karen Campbell: There are clear parameters around what the funding can be used for. Organizations that receive it are quite familiar with these.

The situation you're talking about, however, arises in a case in which these organizations provide a whole range of services through various funding sources and through different accountabilities. In that way they're able to provide the best resource to their community and to their citizens.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: How many people work for your organization here in Ottawa?

The Chair: MP Viersen, we'll just make it really quick.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I need these long minutes. Those are the long minutes.

The Chair: I think we're even on that one.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Okay.

The Chair: We've flipped the page.

With the indulgence of the committee, I have a couple of questions. Maybe you don't even have to reply. You could send the information to us, or if it's available and you know it...

How many of your employers of SPF require a grade 12 education? Typically, in Manitoba just about 100% of employers require grade 12. If you look at graduation rates—of great interest to MP Waugh and me, as former school trustees—you see this becomes a huge barrier.

Can you give us an impression of what the graduation rate is? A band has both members on the reserve and 70% off. What is the graduation rate of students who complete on reserve versus students who complete off reserve?

ESDC has funds for training. Those funds were frozen from 1999 until 2015 or 2016. Could you give an indication of how much that was and how much it is now?

• (0945)

Ms. Karen Campbell: Those funds for the entire strategy were \$292 million, starting in 1999.

In 2016-17, we received additional money in the budget, \$5 million for year one and \$10 million for year two, to look at some pilots through innovative approaches while we were pursuing active engagement around the future of the program.

Additionally, the department found through internal resources enough money to make the total an additional \$50 million which went into the program for those two years. That wasn't money in the strategy, in fact. Those were time-limited resources. Also, when the budget announcement in 2018 provided new resources, they were able to stabilize those time-limited resources and then provide additional money at year five. It's about \$100 million more.

The Chair: That should make a difference.

The public believes that the unemployment rate for indigenous people is within a few percentage points of the national average. However, if you're not fully engaged in looking for work, you fall off of the statistics. Can you give us an impression of how many people are looking for work, indigenous people on reserve versus in an urban setting? I think the word is “underemployed” or “non-engaged”. These are individuals who want to work but don't have an opportunity, and then statistically we lose them.

How many people would actually like to be in the workforce in Canada but unfortunately are not? Do you want to provide that in writing?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes, maybe.

The Chair: Sorry about this. I like statistics.

Finally, we have this situation for apprenticeship where many bands send members off to get trained. Apprenticeship requires a work component, and in that work component, they'd have to go to where the work is, which often, in my experience, is in central Canada. In Manitoba and Ontario, they come from isolated reserves with few opportunities, so they'll have to go to an urban centre for the work experience.

Does the department provide wraparound services for the apprenticeship work component so that they can get out and do that?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It is an eligible expenditure, so depending on—

The Chair: Ineligible or eligible?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It is eligible; they can do it. They assess the case. Again, they have a customized plan for each individual. If it involves wraparound services while the person is in Toronto, for example, giving some hands-on work experience, it is possible for them to use the resources they have to provide those services and that support.

The Chair: That would have to come out of the pool of money that they get.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: Yes.

The Chair: All right. That's it for me.

I wish to thank you so much for your participation. It sounds like you have increased your activities. On the ground, I've heard good things. As a general comment, of course, there are always things that need to be improved. We see from graduation to employment, it's obviously dramatically improved. Continue your good work.

On behalf of the committee, thank you so much for being flexible and coming to our committee.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Gauthier: It has been our pleasure.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

We're going to suspend for a few minutes and then come back in camera to do committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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