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

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, April 7, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco**

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

Thursday, April 7, 2005

•(1115)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)):** Hello colleagues. For several days now, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we have had a study on the agenda on the call for proposals made by the new Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada on funding criteria for community programs.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Chair, I don't want to take up too much time as our witnesses are here. I would like to wish them a warm welcome. It is very important for us to hear them.

However, I must say that this morning, on CBC, there was a news item about Mr. Ian Shaw, from HRSDC.

[English]

He's a project officer and he has been suspended for 10 days for statements he made in Toronto. This person will be our witness next week.

Madam Chair, are we going to go in camera afterwards? Yes?

Okay. When we are in camera, I want to move a motion. I don't want to take time from the witnesses; I want to bring a motion to this committee when we go in camera. If we're going to have witnesses here, we want to make sure they are totally protected and, at the same time, that they do a good job telling us what's happening in the field.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You will notice, Mr. Godin, that we will be dealing with committee business in the second part of our agenda. You will be able to come back to the matter at that time. I will hand the floor over to you immediately and you will be able to explain exactly what the situation is. First, we will listen to the witnesses.

Ms. Gagnon.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Thank you. Has the motion been moved? Are you going to table the motion after the witnesses appear?

**The Chair:** Listen, it won't change things if we talk about it now. We will talk about this later. The witnesses are here.

We have several witnesses before us. We will start with Mr. Luc Labbé, director general of the Centre d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes. Mr. Labbé is accompanied by Mr. Claude Séguin. There will be two representatives from the Oeuvres de la Maison Dauphine, Mr. Michel Boisvert, director general, and Mr. Pierre Dallaire, grant records custodian. Finally, we will hear from Ms. Nicole Galarneau, co-president of the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training.

Welcome to all of you. Each organization has five minutes to make its presentation. When all the presentations are completed, my colleagues will ask questions to those of their choosing.

We will start with Mr. Labbé.

•(1120)

**Mr. Luc Labbé (Director General, Centre d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes):** Hello.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting us and listening to us today. We are most grateful for this privilege.

As we only have five minutes, I'll move straight on to my testimony. Firstly, I would like to indicate that I am primarily here today as a disabled person who is severely visually impaired. I am also before you as an employer with human resources and hiring management responsibilities, and finally as a volunteer committed to employability training for disabled persons. For over eight years now, I have been chairman of the board of directors of a community organization in the Montreal region, responsible for enhancing employability of a clientele who are visually impaired.

What follows is our point of view on the study that the committee is undertaking on community program funding criteria throughout Canada. Quite clearly, the representatives of the Canadian public, in this case you, are focusing largely on disabled persons' integration into and access to the labour market. I share the same concern.

Regardless of what political party you belong to, you are all willing to enhance this integration and access through employment programs and strategies. We believe that this willingness needs to trickle down through the administration, within the federal bureaucracy. To us, this doesn't seem to be an easy task given the current program criteria and the fact that they are enforced on a daily basis. Part of the administrative burden needs to be reduced, if not abolished.

When you look at what has been done over the past 20 to 30 years to enhance disabled persons' integration into and access to the labour market, the track record is not at all encouraging. Indeed, unemployment levels for disabled persons remain unacceptable.

Perhaps steps should be taken to ensure that community program funding criteria are more in line with the reality of what goes on in the community. Furthermore, individuals' initiatives and innovations and those of community groups really must be recognized.

As we have very little time, Mr. Séguin and I have developed a project, in a very specific framework, which we believe to be innovative. If you don't mind, I will ask Mr. Séguin to give you an example of this innovative community project which, at the outset, would require funding on an experimental basis. Criteria could be developed thereafter.

**The Chair:** I should warn you that you don't have enough time to present the complete version of your project. So I would ask you to present the major points. We will treat the remainder of the document as if it were a brief and distribute it among committee members.

**Mr. Claude Séguin (Centre d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes):** Okay.

It is my turn to thank you for having us here today. My name is Claude Séguin and I am the Director General of an organization called the Comité d'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre pour personnes handicapées. This Quebec-based organization's general mission is to ensure the coordination of different services and resources. Our primary focus is training, our secondary focus being disabled persons' access to the workforce. Obviously, I have referred to training because in many cases having the necessary skills is a prerequisite when trying to break through into the labour market.

We have tried to be innovative with this project. Furthermore, we are already working on making this initiative known. The labour market is very broad, which is why we decided to target specific companies, notably those that are subject to the federal employment equity framework.

As you are all aware, several companies have an obligation to the federal government to deliver outcomes, and more specifically to the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. We also know that it's difficult for companies to update their employment equity plans. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities concluded in June 2000 that support, namely expertise, must be made available to those responsible for companies' employment equity programs.

We want to enhance disabled persons' access to the workforce within this framework.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** You have used all your time presenting the project. I'll give you another minute but, please, get to the point as I asked you to from the outset.

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** The goal of the proposal we want to submit is to support those businesses. Here are a few examples: facilitating training sessions on all of these issues, preparing employment equity programs and participating in their implementation, working with the resources already in place to plan and organize the programs,

supporting adaptation to the organization of work, seeing to all the issues that the businesses encounter.

If you give me a few more seconds, I can tell you about our conclusions. In our opinion, the employment equity programs defined by the federal legal framework give us the opportunity to promote the hiring of disabled persons. We believe that businesses that have employment equity programs need help and we're in a position to give it. We also believe that we should support innovation in that area because there has been little progress in making it easier for disabled persons to access jobs. Finally, we believe that the political side, if it were more proactive, could promote social economy projects which would translate political values into concrete terms, as you say you want to help persons with disabilities to fulfil themselves.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Séguin.

Thank you for offering your services to the federal government and others.

We will now go to Mr. Michel Boisvert from Oeuvres de la Maison Dauphine.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert (Director General, Les Oeuvres de la Maison Dauphine):** Thank you for your welcome.

La Maison Dauphine is an organization which provides many services to help street kids in the Quebec city area. We accepted your invitation in order to talk to you about HRSDC's heavy paperwork burden.

Non-profit organizations in Quebec have a long democratic tradition of which HRSDC's services appear to be unaware. In Quebec, we have no choice but to be transparent. Charters, regulations, general assemblies, boards of administration, accountability to departments that give us minimal funding, all that forces us to be transparent all year long. Sometimes, when dealing with HRSDC's services, we, at Maison Dauphine and other community organizations in the Quebec city area have the feeling that we're seen as people who are trying to rip off the federal system.

We absolutely don't want to look at the efficiency—or the lack of efficiency—of provincial-federal agreements, but we did include in our document—which you may read, if you wish—the nine stages that must be gone through when negotiating a community action partnership initiatives program managed by HRSDC before getting an answer. I can show you the sheet and you can take a look at it. When there's a federal-provincial agreement, that adds a 10th stage. In order to meet the criteria for a grant application, the road is rather long and distribution of funds may be delayed.

**The Chair:** Mr. Boisvert, I have to explain things to the members of the committee because the text that was handed to us is in French only. We're getting it translated. In this text, there are actually...

[English]

the nine steps that Mr. Boisvert was referring to. All this will be translated and given to the members.

• (1130)

[Translation]

They don't have it in front of them at this time, Mr. Boisvert.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** I won't make any comments. You can look at it.

I have two points to make considering the red tape. Bilingualism being part of the picture, we often get information on calls for tender a bit late because of the translation. That gives community organizations very little time to submit in a timely fashion.

Moreover, the documents explaining the criteria to access the federal government funding offer are complex. Very often, we must use several sources of information, several kinds of documents, either through the Internet or otherwise, to finally determine the centre of interest to which we should apply. It's rather lengthy.

Thus, when the time comes to write up the funding request, we have difficulty in finding an official who can provide clarification on the documents we received. It is very important, when writing up a request, to conform to HRSDC's criteria without losing sight of our specific and essential mission. So it's hard for us to make the connection and remain competitive.

Now for the analysis of the funding request by the proper officials. It is onerous in that it is difficult. Why is it so? Because the criteria can be interpreted in many ways. There are many criteria and the official examining the request interprets the criteria in a given way. Now, we have noticed, during our negotiations, that the official works on a committee with other groups of officials who will be examining our request with him. Those other officials will interpret the criteria differently and ask for more details, and the ball is back in play. So we have to renegotiate the agreement that was discussed with the official who recognized the viability of the project and also that we could take it to term. So we have to start the work all over again.

The consequence is that the project gets underway late and when the delivery of the funds is delayed, we have to renegotiate an adjustment to the budget because of the date.

Now, let's talk about the red tape surrounding accountability. HRSDC, of course, provides us with evaluation grids and gives us enough of them so that we can provide monthly results on the project as well as a report on the administrative aspect and the expenditures. We prepare an expenditure report every month and indicate what stage the project is at.

We work with the grids and we sometimes have to improve them because they don't quite correspond to reality. We communicate through the Internet. Sometimes we tell the officials how to fill out their grids. We have to make phone calls. If the HRSDC people and the people at the organization are always changing, you can understand that there's incompetence on both sides whether it be HRSDC or Oeuvres de la Maison Dauphine.

We wonder if HRSDC doesn't find amusement in changing officials around once they finally know a community organization well, how it works and have managed to establish a climate of trust. During question period, we can give you examples to support what I've said.

I'd like to conclude, if I have any time left. What effect does that have on community organizations?

**The Chair:** Be brief, Mr. Boisvert.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** Yes.

Usually, a community organization employs from 5 to 10 people and has a budget of \$200,000 to \$400,000. Staff turns over rather frequently because we mainly get project funding. I can assure you that a small community organization is buried under the administrative red tape. The organization has to be well structured and have a lot of staff available, like ours, thank goodness, to pass HRSDC's administrative test.

That means that when you help a community organization who in its turn is there to help the have-nots, you're weakening that community organization. Basically, you're preventing us from doing our work with our clients because we actually have to work on accountability or funding requests. It's as if your money was there only to support the organization and not the clients it's trying to reach.

The lengthy negotiations lead to delays in the attribution of funds and this leads to lack of motivation for the staff. How does that happen? As these are all ad hoc projects, while waiting for the funding, we risk losing the person we chose to implement the project. As there's no funding forthcoming, that person will find another job elsewhere. You then have to hire someone new, show him the ropes and train him in order that he can implement the project. This leads your staff into stressful situations and leads to burnouts.

At the end of the day, we wonder if private organizations, the for-profit organizations, have to deal with criteria as severe as the community organizations. If they did, I'm not sure they'd do business with HRSDC.

• (1135)

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

I will not make any comments. I think that what you just said does not require any comments from me. It's very clear. Thank you.

Now, we will hear from Ms. Galarneau, of the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau (Co-Chair, Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training):** I would like to thank the members of this committee for inviting us to appear.

The Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training has been around for some 10 years. In recent weeks, you have had the opportunity of hearing some of our members from Ontario, the Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects, as well as members from British Columbia, who are part of ASPECT. These members were particularly shaken by the directive issued in February 2004, dealing with the call for proposals for service agreements exceeding \$500,000. But even though this made more of an impact in Ontario and British Columbia, other provinces are affected as well, perhaps less by the call for proposals issue—to which I will return—than by the three other directives.

First, I'll talk about the first directive, which surprisingly billed itself as a specialization and concentration initiatives that focuses on job separation. This means that one officer recommends a project, while another concludes the agreement and does the follow-up. In small regions that have only two HRSDC officials, you can imagine that projects are significantly delayed when, say, one of the two officials is sick.

The second directive deals with the review committees, which are formed before agreements are signed to ensure that those agreements are in compliance with the expectations of community committees. That's very good—but who will be on those committees? How will they be established? Who decides that? Just like Mr. Boisvert said earlier, we can give you examples of how such review committees make the agreement renewal or proposal process more cumbersome.

With respect to the issue of calls for proposals for agreements of \$500,000 or more, we know full well that countries like Australia issue calls for proposals to their community organizations. We are starting to open the door. Today, we are looking at \$500,000 and over, but tomorrow, will we bring that down to \$250,000, and the day after to \$50,000?

In the past 10, 15 and even 20 years, the government has handed over significant amounts to community organizations. Look at what is happening and what has happened in northern Ontario and British Columbia—it makes no sense to simply move services and activities. Those involved in activities and actions would benefit far more if the organizations in which investments were made were consolidated.

Let's come back to the call for proposals process. When we survey community organizations in Canada, particularly in Quebec, we wonder—and we are organizations that specialize in employability—where those calls for proposals are published and how we are notified of any new programs.

Unfortunately, I have to say that six years ago, before the federal-provincial agreement was concluded, we were preferred partners of the federal government. We were in constant contact with HRDC. But for the past six years, since employment measures were transferred, we have dropped off the radar screen.

Perhaps you would say that Quebec's situation is different, with the order in council issue. Organizations financed by Quebec need permission to do business with Ottawa. However, the order in council is not in effect at the moment, and things have been working well for the past two years. But we are still wondering where all those contacts have gone.

• (1140)

I noticed in your committee's notes dated early March that you mentioned projects in Quebec with a value of over \$900,000. Michel Saucier said when he appeared before you that projects valued at over \$500,000—in fact, valued up to \$900,000—had been awarded. I found two.

How did those organizations manage to get those projects? We don't know. We ask the question, but nobody seems to have an answer. The whole issue of calls for proposals is a problem. We would like to be transparent, but please make sure that we know what projects are available.

My colleagues also agree that the financial controls are extremely cumbersome. My colleagues from New Brunswick said that they had tremendous difficulty last fall because they were being asked for so many reports and because it was difficult to get work done. The same thing goes for my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador. Yesterday, I was talking to a colleague from Manitoba. The financial controls and funding difficulties combined verge on infringement.

When you are told that we do not have the right to fund the benefits of our staff, that those benefits will be funded by some other programs and not by yours, that makes no sense. This is tantamount to micromanaging organizations. I was talking to Ms. Bakopanos about this a little earlier. I do not believe that we find the same problems at the Canadian, the national, level.

We all agree that we would like to move things forward. We want participants to obtain services. However, when the administrative machinery is involved, we end up competing to see who can justify the time put into doing the work. Errors are made.

When we have organizations with contracts of \$130,000 one year, and two officials come to audit those \$130,000 contracts, I have to say, as Mr. Boisvert said, that we look like a band of thieves.

However, I don't think we did anything bad. When we look at our results over the past 20 or 25 years, I would say we can be proud of what we have achieved in Canada. We can be proud of what we achieve in each of our regions, and in each of our communities.

There is a great deal to discuss. Thank you for inviting us today.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Galarneau. Once again, what we have heard today reflects what other witnesses have said over the past few days.

Mr. Devolin will open the discussion. Mr. Devolin, today's discussion is entirely in French.

• (1145)

[English]

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Next year.

Thank you.

I want to begin by apologizing to my colleagues and the witnesses today for being late this morning. I was unfortunately caught up with something in my office. Second, I want to let you know that several of my colleagues today are attending memorial services for the Pope back in their ridings. Many of them left this morning to travel, so their absence today is certainly no reflection on their concern about this issue. So once again I'll be carrying the can for my team.

I have one question, and I'd like to hear a short answer from each of you.

We've heard many witnesses talk about the way the old system worked, why the changes were made, and how we got where we are today. But looking forward and realizing that many people think the current system is not working and that changes need to be made, if you had the ear of the minister for one minute, what one or two things would you say? What advice would you give to the minister in one minute or less that would help us to create a better system?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Labbé:** If I may, I will answer in French.

Basically, I would tell the minister that we talked about the accountability principle, because community organizations and programs funded by the federal government are stewards of public funds. Thus, they must be accountable, and that is how it should be. But I would say that funding criteria must ensure a balance between financial controls and client services. Mr. Boisvert was saying that communities are being hindered.

There is also an issue of recognizing expertise. Where is that expertise? The expertise can be found in the community—in community organizations. We have to recognize that expertise.

Ms. Galarneau mentioned that, in the case of calls for proposals for projects valued at \$500,000 and over, the expertise acquired by some organizations has to some extent been set aside because other organizations that offered the service at lower cost were selected. There is an accountability problem there. How can we ensure that taxpayers' money is properly used, while recognizing expertise? We have to recognize expertise when we find it to ensure a balance between the financial aspect and the service aspect.

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** First of all, I would say that it is high time we take an interest in the return on investment in social programs, particularly when it comes to access to employment for disabled persons. Many organizations are working on the issue, and with little means do succeed in achieving a number of things.

But we know that, in real terms, access to employment for disabled persons has not changed significantly over the past 20 years. If the situation is almost unchanged after many programs have been implemented at the cost of several million dollars, it is high time that we accept that and define criteria for our clients and for the results we wish to achieve, rather than focus on process and procedures.

For a while now, I have been hearing how management that focuses on process does not work. I know that all of you care deeply about access to employment for people with disabilities. But unfortunately, I believe the administrative machinery you have to deal with is extremely cumbersome and perhaps difficult to manage. In my view, you should be more proactive and take a fresh approach to this issue. That would better reflect your commitment. Your own administrative machinery is stopping you from fulfilling your commitment.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** I have two words for the minister: regionalization and flexibility. To the federal government, the province of Quebec is a region. I am from the National Capital Region, therefore from the Quebec region. When we talk about regionalization, that is what we mean. Regardless of the policy, HRSDC authorities in Quebec City and Eastern Quebec should have decision-making powers, management authority. This would not prevent the minister from signing documents, and it would certainly streamline the process.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** So what you would like is delegation of authority.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** Yes, more authority should be delegated to regional offices and other departments.

With regard to recognition of community organizations in Quebec, we are recognized by the province of Quebec. You have to deal with organizations recognized by the province of Quebec, otherwise you will have problems. I don't need to ask the federal government to recognize community organizations, because we are already recognized, so the federal government has to recognize us.

With respect to flexibility, a community organization has a certain approach to management. That approach is probably different in Quebec, as is often the case. With a specific client base, we need to have some flexibility in how we meet criteria if we want our projects to succeed.

For example, we work with young street people. If we have a rehabilitation project for young street people and they don't want to come on board, we need someone they have known for over six months. But when we deal with HRSDC, the department often forces us to hire someone new. It's difficult enough to give an experienced person this job and that person may be the only one who can do it, yet I still have to hire someone new. Obviously you force me to create employment, but you make the actual work with clients ineffective.

In my case, that's what I would call flexibility. I deal with young street people. If I was dealing with young people who had regular employment problems, your criteria would probably work just fine. They would also work for all other organizations, but they don't work for mine. So who will be making those judgments? The regional office. The regional office will determine whether an organization is working well.

[English]

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** I just wanted to make sure everyone had an opportunity.

**The Chair:** Everyone has not had a chance yet, Mr. Devolin. I saw you moving and thought perhaps you wanted to—

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** No, I just wanted to give them an opportunity.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Dallaire, would you like to add something to Mr. Boisvert's comments?

**Mr. Pierre Dallaire (Funding Liaison Officer, Les Oeuvres de la Maison Dauphine):** No, that's fine.

**The Chair:** Ms. Galarneau.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** If I had a minute to spend with the minister, I think I would first emphasize the fact that during the last few weeks there has been a delegation of powers to sign contracts and agreements of \$500,000 and less. It was given to the regions and that helps things along. Bravo! That does give a bit of an extra point.

On the other hand, I would have a question that I'd also put to the government as a whole. I'd ask her to think about the place of the individual as opposed to the place of a business. Actually, when you look at HRSDC's present business plan, you can see that over three years there was a total transfer toward industry. The *workplace strategy*, in other words, everything that was done over the past six years had the effect of handing the individual back to the provinces and having businesses taken care of at the federal level.

When you're having problems today with the programs aimed at individuals, you have to ask the following question: does the federal government still want to participate in what's being done at the individual level or has it decided that now that the paradigm has changed and that we're going towards a labour shortage and not a job shortage that it will support businesses so that they can keep their labour force and recruit new staff, for example, by informing them on the diversity of immigrants? An individual and a business are two different things. I'd like to get an answer to that question.

At the federal level, we're sitting on many committees and we're having problems introducing projects for individuals while it's easy to introduce projects that have a link with business or boards or industrial sectoral committees.

So that's the question: what role does the federal level want to play both at the business level and the individual level?

• (1155)

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

[*English*]

Your time is up, Mr. Devolin, but I'm sure you'll get another question a little bit later.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Gagnon.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

You've been pretty informative. I can understand your frustration with trying to understand the HRSDC's objectives. I for one have tried to understand what the calls for proposals of \$500,000 and more consisted of. I searched the Internet. After a lot of research, I finally found out how projects were granted in the context of career focus. We'll talk about skills link later on. As for career focus, I didn't find any calls for proposal for \$500,000 or more: I only found projects totalling between \$89,000 and \$150,000. Those were the seven projects that were managed by Montreal region and which, after, were sent on to seven businesses in Quebec.

I have two questions. Are we losing money with this new regional fund? It's not a 500,000-dollar fund; it's a 900,000-dollar envelope. That explains why you haven't managed to find very many projects. I didn't find any amounting to \$500,000 or more. As for the \$89,000 to \$150,000 projects I did find, three were in Montreal, in the riding of the HRSDC minister. There was one in the Bas-du-Fleuve region, one in Francheville in the Mauricie and another one in Blainville.

Since new management has been developed for the amounts, have we lost money in Quebec and in Quebec's regions; it was said before that we should be able to have some sort of regional control. The HRSDC director in the Quebec region doesn't have access to some information and has no control over the resource budget. I know that organizations in the Quebec city area have lost their funding. For example, before, we were getting \$400,000 for a project on linking post-secondary students and the labour market. We haven't received a cent to date for that project.

I'd like to hear your comments on that question, Ms. Galarneau, and later on I'll have a question for Mr. Boisvert.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** When I did my own research about the calls for proposal of \$500,000 and more, I was told about two organizations. Maybe it was in the context of the career focus or skills link projects.

As to whether we lost money, I don't think that's the case. I actually think that the funds were spread around more broadly. Many organizations say they no longer want contracts with the federal government because it's costing them money. It doesn't make any sense. There's no reimbursement for administrative costs or for employees' pension funds. Actually, it seems that there's a parallel network being set up. There's the regular organizations' network, but another network of organizations is starting to get funding and doesn't necessarily have expertise in matters of employment and employability. Any community organization likes to get funds in order to offer services. My concern is way more in that direction. There's a parallel network being set up and the day the federal government says it's drying up the funding, it will disappear.

I'd like to get back to a point raised earlier by Mr. Boisvert on recognition.

Yes, in Quebec we have an independent community action secretariat and I'd like to remind you that Quebec is one of the only provinces that has signed a partnership protocol with community organizations addressing employability. This protocol translates the values and principles as well as the basis on which we're to do business together. In my opinion, it would be really interesting to have this method prevailing between the federal government and all of the organizations. That would allow you, amongst other things, to recognize the work done by organizations that have been working with you for the last 10, 12 or 15 years.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Ms. Gagnon.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Boisvert, you told us earlier that there's far too much bureaucracy involved in the formalities that have to be completed to get a grant and it was an imposition on your organization in terms of manpower and resources.

Are you in a position to tell us what causes the extra expense with your request? Are you talking about a full-time employee here?

**Mr. Pierre Dallaire:** As I'm the one taking care of the request for grants, I can answer.

For example, the first time we got funding from the Skills Link Program to help street kids in Quebec city, at the Maison Dauphine, we were given access to a single psychosocial worker to take care of eight street kids. These were kids who had totally let go of the system and slipped through the cracks of our great welfare state.



Our niche is artistic activities for street kids. Now, we had to pay a facilitator out of our own pocket to take care of only that program's activities. We tried to negotiate things and after hours of negotiation we finally got something. My boss even got mad over the phone, at one point. We said we would stop doing business with those people because it forced us to spend our own money to manage activities undertaken within the parameters of the program. By doing that, we wind up giving money to the federal government in order to access our own programs. It's a rather paradoxical situation.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** I would simply add that in terms of it being a success or useful, Skills Link certainly is useful to our young recipients. For an organization whose mission it is to help them, access to such a program is important.

However, if the organization does not receive funding from elsewhere, be it core funding or otherwise, the project cannot be a success. In this respect, I fund success. We have a lot of visibility in Quebec City. For the people at HRSDC, it's a major success, and that is thanks to Skills Link. What they don't know, however, is that I'm responsible for finding a way to have effective staff in the area. Since I'm well known, I frequently negotiate with HRSDC, and I get bits and pieces here and there. But, you should see how stressed out the official is in granting me that, in light of the fact that he can't do the same for others.

We would mention again that if a community education worker is paid by HRSDC, but that there is no psycho-social support worker to help street youth and continue to solve their problems, the youth will never complete their social cultural activity. Yet they must. But where does one find the money? It didn't appear in the criteria. You see how stressful this can be, even in HRSDC offices in Quebec City.

**The Chair:** Regrettably, I cannot give the floor to Mr. Labbé. Maybe during another round.

Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome everyone. I know that it isn't easy to come home to speak to the committee for three minutes and feel that you were treated fairly. In fact, it's more like five minutes and a quarter, but as far as I'm concerned, the more I speak, the more time I waste.

On February 16, 2004, the government announced that criteria would be changed. I would like to know if you were all consulted beforehand.

Mr. Séguin?

•(1205)

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** No.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Labbé?

**Mr. Luc Labbé:** No.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Boisvert?

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** No.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Dallaire?

**Mr. Pierre Dallaire:** Absolutely not.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Ms. Galarneau?

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Absolutely not.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Well, that answers my question.

From what I've understood, for the last 12, 15 or 20 years you've been doing good work in your regions under these programs. This should be said, and it's the case in my riding as well. I can understand that you feel some frustration: the more effective you are, the more good work you do, the likelier it is you will lose the opportunity to continue doing that. In fact, projects of \$500,000 and over are going elsewhere. You also mentioned all the administrative red tape involved. You are not equipped to deal with that. It becomes volunteer work.

What is the future for your organizations, community-based organizations, if the government continues along the same track? I would like to hear your comments on that.

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** The future of our organizations is not necessarily in jeopardy. The results that we hope to attain are. I'll give you an example.

You have federal employment equity legislation which aims specifically to improve access to the workforce for people with disabilities. Some companies that have contracts with you are forced to show results. Approximately 4.5 per cent of their workforce should be composed of persons with disabilities. Yet your own statistics show that persons with disabilities account for approximately 1.5 per cent of the workforce in these companies, and not 4.5 per cent.

I'm not trying to reproach these companies. They have equity programs and the integration of persons with disabilities is not an easy thing to do. It's complex, and we recognize that fact.

In that respect, when we talk about the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, this is a public meeting, and we cannot hear the witnesses because of the noise. Could we somehow...

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** The Office for Disability Issues did recognize this program and wanted services to be extended to companies to help them run their own employment equity programs. Why are the programs not responding? Why do we never get results when we offer to help these companies?

What I find worrisome, as I said in my opening remarks, is the lack of results flowing from your investment.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** But why are you unsuccessful? Could you elaborate further? Are you prevented from...

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** No one is preventing us from doing anything, but given that the current programs are inefficient and that no progress has been made in gaining access to the job market for the disabled people, as the statistics show, we must find new solutions. But when we submit innovative projects, the administrative machinery cannot handle them.

We are still stuck with practices that emphasize procedures, not results. We just saw an example of this unwieldy bureaucracy. The department is obviously more concerned with the process than with the final result.

Things are not working because there is no openness to new solutions, or to well-designed experiments that could help us create new models and have a better impact on policies and programs.

We must realize that we have been spinning our wheels for the past 20 years.

●(1210)

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** Fortunately, the future of not-for-profit community organizations cannot be dependent on government funding. At least, that is my opinion. If the State took everything in hand, this would be its responsibility and we would be employed by the State as managers.

On the other hand, government programs—HRSDC does not do any core funding, but it funds projects—are very helpful in getting results. This helps us carry out much more effective projects, for many more young people, for example.

The organization must stand on its own feet. However, as I said, we could work on a very small scale in our region and only take care of a dozen youths or so. If some parts of the government-run projects are in keeping with our mission, they must really be helpful. We need more flexibility in accessing these programs. Then, we could do a great deal more.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bakopanos has the floor.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.):** I would like to thank all our guests.

I have had the opportunity to work at both the provincial and federal level. The problems you raised, Mr. Boisvert, are the same ones that I had to face when I was working in a provincial department.

Of course, the administrative burden is too great for many non-governmental organizations. I know this because, as an MP, I see this situation with organizations in my riding.

Just now, you said in answer to Mr. Godin's question, that you had not been consulted. On the other hand, when department officials came to the committee, they reassured us that consultations had been going on since February 16. Obviously, they cannot consult all organizations. I do not know how many there are in Canada. They are doing this for the very reason that these new directives have only been in place for one year.

Mr. Boisvert, if I understand your testimony...

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** On a point of order, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I want to make a correction to what was just said. I did not talk about the period after June 16, 2004, but the period preceding this date. Ms. Bakopanos spoke of the period following this date, whereas I spoke of the period prior to June 16.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Mr. Godin, the departmental officials came here. They told us that they began consultations on February 16. I said that very clearly. Mr. Godin, that was my follow-up to your question. I just wanted to clarify that for you. It is important, given the fact that the program is for one year. Therefore, we want to know whether, since February 16, there have been

consultations to improve the process, given that the process was a new one for the federal government.

Mr. Boisvert, you can tell me that you were not consulted. You said that you have very good relations with department officials in your region. I can tell you that it is also the case for organizations that involved street workers in my riding. I'm aware of the problem.

I have two projects. One project has a budget of more than \$500,000 under a federal government program for the homeless. This project also includes street kids.

For my part, I support the idea that we must provide for administrative costs in the grants given. However, I'm not sure if I agree with you, Ms. Galarneau, when you say that employees' social benefits must also be covered.

Is there a portion of the grants which is allocated for administrative costs, at both the provincial and federal levels? I was never aware of the existence of such projects at the provincial level when I worked for the government of Quebec.

Perhaps this should be considered for the future. When a project costs \$500,000, the administrative costs are obviously very high. Other elements should be added. That could perhaps be one of the committee's recommendations.

I know of no level of governments—neither municipal nor provincial—which includes administrative costs in its grants. Perhaps I am mistaken and someone can demonstrate this.

My question relates to administrative costs. Should they be included in grants? The public officials we met with told us that there would be administrative costs for projects over \$300,000.

●(1215)

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** I will start by answering your question concerning consultations since February 16.

As you know, in Quebec, there are seven groups of organizations involved in employability. These groups are known and recognized. Since February 16, we have never been consulted by the federal government. The seven associations represent more than 500 employability organizations. We're not asking you to consult each and every organization, but to at least consult these seven umbrella groups.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I said that Mr. Boisvert had insisted on the fact that locally, he had very good relations with the government officials.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Yes, relations are good.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I'm not talking about consultations at the departmental level, but consultations at the local level. Were consultations held, given the problems you were confronting? Was there a dialogue?

In the case of my riding's HRSDC office, there's on-going dialogue with non-government organizations. When they have a problem, the officials are called upon to find a solution.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Indeed, I believe that there are exchanges with officials at the local level. Relations have been established and we know that public servants also sit on local community development committees. That is very good. However, there were no consultations as such on the directives.

With respect to the issue of administrative costs, I will read you a comment made by one of the organizations. I quote:

Operating this program costs money!! They do not pay any of the indirect costs such as insurance, rent, bank fees, auditing, etc. nor costs relating to representations, documentation, subscriptions, or even office supplies for hired employees. They only pay for what is used by the participants. In addition, they do not pay all the benefits and it costs us \$700 to make up for the difference between what we pay out and what we are given!!

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** You receive grants from the provincial government. If I understand correctly, the situation is the same.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** No.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Aren't there costs which are covered by the grants?

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** No. I'm going to show you the service agreements of organizations funded by the province. Rent and insurance are included. And they do not dictate the value of contracts.

I would point out to you that seven years ago, the Quebec region was the only one funded by HRSDC for which the value of salaries was set in the contracts. Directors could not be paid more than \$20.62 per hour, and workers could not be paid more than \$17.00 per hour. The contract determines the vacation period. At one time, the amount for vacation pay was 6 per cent and that was reduced to 4 per cent. We would agree that the employer-employee relationship entered a dangerous phase. That is why...

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Just a moment please, Madam. We can come back to that.

**The Chair:** Pardon me. Your time is up but we can come back to that. We will have time later on. I want to make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak. There will be a second round of questions in any case and you will have the opportunity to speak again. It's my role to cut you off, and I do apologize: Ms. Gagnon has the floor again.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** On that point, I will give you the opportunity to speak again and say what you have to tell us. We all understand each other well. No one is saying that all public servants are bad and that there's a bad relationship with them or that Quebec does the same thing. We are here to understand how HRSDC programs are implemented and if they are well adapted to the needs of organizations and of the market. That is the point of our meeting this morning.

I wish to thank the New Democratic Party. This research didn't appear out of no where. There were serious problems in Ontario, British Columbia and the Yukon because these provinces do not have a provincial agreement. It was much broader, and the amounts of money were much larger. On the other hand, we wanted to go further and see what Quebec organizations thought of HRSDC programs. I believe we understand each other well this morning.

• (1220)

[English]

**Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** On a point of order, I wonder why Christiane is thanking the NDP.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I thank the NDP for raising this issue.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Adams:** It's a serious point of order. It's a point of privilege. I see in the media the NDP is saying that over the objections of Liberals and others we are conducting these hearings.

From my understanding, it was an all-party agreement that we would have these hearings. They have been far ranging. Each party has been able to invite witnesses. I hope this is not a partisan thing. The committee itself, which is on HRSD and the status of persons with disabilities, is very interested in these matters.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** The reason I spoke was to give you the floor again.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Adams:** I think it's an all-party inquiry we're having.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Please let Ms. Gagnon speak. I will give you the floor immediately afterwards.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I will not get into an argument about this. I just wanted to point out that members of the NDP raised this problem. We were wondering if we should go further, I agree. I'm saying that the NDP raised this issue within committee. That's all I wanted to say. I thank them. In life, one must be generous.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Let me make a comment, Madam Chair. I do not think that all political parties thought of this at the same time. The problem was raised, and then, everyone agreed to study it. But the issue was raised by the NDP first.

[English]

**Hon. Peter Adams:** Madam Chair, I made my point. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Ms. Galarneau, I would like to hear what you were saying a few minutes ago. I know that Mr. Dallaire would also like to add something on this.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Ms. Gagnon. I would like to come back to the previous matter.

Normally, when issues are raised in committee meetings, they are raised by committee members. Of course, the minister can also raise an issue. Committee members remain MPs who belong to a political party in the House of Commons. However, let me remind Mr. Godin and all those present here that, when a project is accepted, it is accepted by all the members of this committee. In most cases, we have agreed to our projects unanimously. Everyone agreed, with one or two minor exceptions, which required a majority vote.

I do not think that we can say anything without checking the minutes. But, to be fair, we should say that the topic presented by a member and that we have before us now was accepted by all committee members, regardless of their political party. I must emphasize this point.

Thank you.

Ms. Gagnon, you may continue.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** This is much ado about nothing. I merely thanked those who made us aware of an issue. Because of that, we have our witnesses before us today. But there is no need to make an issue out of this.

**The Chair:** Ms. Galarneau.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** You want me to go on telling you about my experience 10 years ago.

Ten years ago, the agreements between organizations and HRDC set very strict controls on salaries and conditions. Moreover, we discussed this point at another level, not just the Quebec region. Incidentally, this matter was never settled. Nonetheless, the issue was dealt with by the transfer, and the signing of the federal-provincial agreements, when the organizations were transferred to Quebec.

However, similar situations are still arising. There are still conditions that are difficult for organizations to comply with, even though they are less strict regarding salaries.

Some organizations say they would rather not apply because of the costs. They are discouraged because they have to do without something that could help them better serve their clients. In this respect, I think employability organizations have always felt there were two sources of funds. Currently, 99 per cent of their funding comes from the province, but the small percentage they get from the federal programs is appreciated. The programs complement each other.

We studied things done through federal programs and through provincial programs. We say, for instance, that subsidies for wages are a complement to programs that help individuals, whereas the province has no money for that purpose. It is good to offer on-the-job experience to youth. The programs should work together whenever possible.

Quebec is still thinking about repatriating the programs for youth. However, we never intended to do this at any cost. Let us keep at least the content of these programs. We should not repatriate moneys that would be redistributed to programs that are not complementary. We are glad to see this complementarity exists. We would like it to continue, but not at any cost.

How are we going to go about this? Employability programs have existed for 130 years. Let us remember our history, and the first groups that provided training to help out our farmers. They provided secretarial training. These were community programs. These programs existed first and foremost in a community and they were created by individuals. Government funds came in later on. I would even say that all too often community sector initiatives are taken over by governments. Much is lost and the regulations are too stringent.

We hope that we will still exist in the future.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** We hope so too, Ms. Galarneau.

Mr. D'Amours, you have the floor.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The objective of today's meeting is to discuss the issue of the call for proposals. I would like you all to tell us—briefly—how many projects over \$500,000 were approved in the last year.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** None.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** None, because we don't know of them.

**Mr. Luc Labbé:** No comment.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** You said that you don't know. However, I recall you mentioned that formerly, there was more discussion, more cooperation and more information. At the time, did your organizations have contracts over \$500,000?

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Yes. Before the transfer of programs, there were groups that had contracts in excess of \$500,000. Under the federal-provincial agreement, the lion's share was transferred to the province and that was that. However, before the federal-provincial agreement, there were organizations that received contracts worth more than \$500,000, but the rules weren't the same. It was a different ball game.

• (1230)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I understand.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. D'Amours. Since you raised the issue, I would simply like to remind committee members that the program is now run entirely by the province of Quebec, not by the federal government, in the case of Quebec. So, when you hear that there are none, I suppose the reason is that the Quebec government would have made proposals to organizations, not the federal government.

Isn't that correct, Ms. Galarneau?

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Not quite. Of course, a substantial budget was transferred to Quebec, but we must not forget that all the programs under the Youth Employment Strategy remained—

**The Chair:** That's another program, Ms. Galarneau. I'm referring to programs of \$500,000 or more.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Under the Youth Employment Strategy, there are contracts that can exceed \$500,000. That can happen.

**The Chair:** Sorry, I apologize for the interruption.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** It can happen. Last week, I personally called HRSDC, and I was given the name of two organizations which have received contracts over \$500,000 in Montreal.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Madam Chair, I hope that the comment you made will not count as part of my time. Thank you very much.

I'm referring to something slightly different, but I'll ask you the question anyway. Ms. Galarneau, you said that there were organizations within your coalition which had received more than \$500,000.

In the other organizations, before last year, were there any projects over \$500,000, however they were managed?

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** None. We are not big enough for that.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I understand, but we were supposed to discuss the differences between then and now.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I'd like to give you some information.

**The Chair:** Excuse me, Mr. D'Amours. Don't worry, I will give you all of your time.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. D'Amours, I have to explain to you that in Quebec, we have a regional envelope, which is managed out of Montreal. It contains \$900,000. We were told that in Quebec there was a project worth \$500,000 or more. Last week, I discovered that there were actually seven projects for between \$89,000 and \$127,000. I brought this information to the committee: Do not look for projects of \$500,000 up, because there are none. That comes under Career Focus, a program for postsecondary level youth wanting to enter the labour force. So, there are no projects worth \$500,000 or more.

The thing that we should focus on is the fact that they have an accountability process as well as a follow-up system and criteria for programs of \$500,000 or more.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gagnon. That's very good.

Mr. D'Amours, you have your full time allocation.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the end, the five minutes will turn into a half hour.

Even though you say that you don't know where the programs are, I would like to know why things are not working so well. I would like to hear your opinion on the new call for proposals process. I would like to hear your opinion on this, because that is the point of our hearings today, in previous weeks and in the weeks to come. You tell us that you cannot find programs and that you are not being informed. I would like to hear more about this. Indeed, such things do not only occur in this case. I have experienced it in my province, New Brunswick. The same thing occurs: people do not necessarily know about the programs that exist.

Can you please tell us how the new call for proposals process is hurting to you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Boisvert.

**Mr. Michel Boisvert:** It cannot be harmful to us, because we cannot apply for this program. It is not only just that we do not about it.

•(1235)

**The Chair:** Mr. Labbé.

**Mr. Luc Labbé:** If you allow me, Madam Chair, as a witness here this morning and as a Canadian citizen, I believe that beyond the details, what must be taken into account under the funding criteria for community programs are the program directions.

Mrs. Galarneau spoke earlier of individuals and companies. In a market economy, we talk about supply and demand. We must act on both. For the millions of dollars invested by the Department to enhance employability and increase access to the labour market, for disabled persons the criteria must flow from general policy orientations, and from the recognition of expertise held by those who work in the field.

We must promote on innovation. What has been developed over the last 20 years has not produced the results expected. Accountability procedures must be simplified for community organizations, which are run by volunteers like myself. I do not draw a salary; I volunteer 8, 10, sometimes 15 hours a week. Some people are paid, but salaries in the community sector are not great. Criteria must be established on the basis of policy direction, recognition of the expertise of those who work in the field, simplified accountability procedures and innovation. The structures put in place over the last 20 years do not work.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** If I understand correctly, other things have to be reassessed in addition to the calls for proposals. I am not just talking about the calls for proposals, but other things that must be streamlined or modernized.

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** I do not want to repeat myself. My concerns go beyond the details, and they are of two types. As Canadian citizens and taxpayers, I think we should be asking ourselves whether we are getting our money's worth as regards the results we want to achieve for disabled persons, because that is our concern.

As Mr. Labbé said, and as I mentioned earlier: when we see that a situation is not improving, is it not time to review the entire issue rather than fine tune? Otherwise, we spend all our time talking about the details and forget about the essentials. We focus only on the process, without thinking about the results. Before deciding on whether there should be 15 or 22 criteria, we should ask what results have been achieved so far. Statistics, even federal statistics, show that the program did not produce good results. The criteria should be changed so as to produce results. How are we going to measure these results with respect to the disabled? An increasing number of disabled persons will be entering the labour force. This is what Mr. Labbé was saying: since we have not achieved good results so far, let's not be afraid to innovate with a certain number of programs, without forgetting to evaluate the results. I am not recommending wild experimentation; there must be some structure. We must try this approach otherwise, even with the very best criteria, we will continue to waste money.

**The Chair:** The last question will be asked by Mr. Godin.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Earlier on, Ms. Galarneau, you were saying that very often, community organizations work hard, only to have the government pick up the project and use it. They take the ones that work and leave the others the ones that do not.

As far as good projects are concerned, is the government not moving towards the privatization of programs? What are the risks? I would like to hear your comments on that. In my area, there are groups doing volunteer work within the community; they care about people. Indeed, I would like to congratulate you on the work that you are doing. But success, in the private sector, is measured in profits, while people who work very hard are often forgotten. The most important criterion for a private sector organization is profit, whereas for you, it is the client.

You were saying that there is too much red tape and that you can no longer reach the client. The government should review that, because we are moving in the wrong direction. It should move quickly because we are going to fall into either the Atlantic or into the Pacific. We are no longer grounded.

I would like to hear what you have to say about my comments.

As I prefer the left, let us begin on the left side.

● (1240)

**The Chair:** We will begin on the left, therefore with Ms. Galarneau.

**Ms. Nicole Galarneau:** Where are we headed? It is true that organizations spend almost 50 per cent of their time filling in forms. It is a huge loss.

Earlier, I was discussing calls for proposals. Yes, it is risky. Today, they seem to be just for the community-sector, but we do not all have the same definition of the word “community”. The definition is diluted when we speak the other language. I have seen for our experience that when we talk about *community* in English, that does not necessarily mean “communautaire”. A private sector business may be *community*, that is to say it works for the community. That in no way means “*community-based*”. We have to be careful when people talk to us about calls for proposals. There is always the danger that we will cross the line and open up the calls for proposals to tender to the private sector. In the private sector, as you have pointed out, the profits do not go to the community, but into the pockets of the owners.

I think you could look at the results of the experiments that were done in British Columbia, where the provincial government gave contracts to the private sector. They are big machines and we might well ask whether their approach is based on the individual's needs. These people have the means to cope with delays, and difficulties with payments and the signing of contracts, because they have budgets that community-based, not-for-profit—I could use a string of adjectives—organizations do not have. We do not have resources of that type.

**The Chair:** I will ask the other representatives to make some very brief comments, because we are already late.

Mr. Dallaire.

**Mr. Pierre Dallaire:** Yes, we do indeed have the impression that we are seeing a shift towards the private sector.

I want to come back to the question that was asked on the subject of the calls for proposals.

It appears logical to us to work from the needs of the community, because that is our specialty. We identify the needs with our board of directors at our general meeting, we study the subsidy market and choose what suits us best. We obviously do so according to our mission. Calls for proposals that are not clearly targeted do not interest us.

I would add that with HRSDC's accountability requirements, and even more specifically in the case of the SCPI program, I feel like a subcontractor doing the official's work for him. I provide them with finished documents that they merely have to transfer to someone higher up. Yes, I have the feeling that I am doing their work, and that leaves a bad taste in my mouth. One wonders what purpose is served. Moreover, the HRSDC programs that we use are often not profitable for us. We cannot get reimbursed for building expenses, electricity, etc. It is becoming complicated.

● (1245)

**The Chair:** Mr. Séguin.

**Mr. Claude Séguin:** I think that “private” does not necessarily equal “profit”. I think we can promote certain private initiatives. We submitted a proposal. Our organization is non-profit and therefore does not seek to make money, but to help businesses that have employment equity programs. We feel that this project could become self-financing because we would make businesses responsible for employment equity; it would be up to them to pay professional fees in order to update their programs.

I think it is simplistic to only say that “private” equals “profit”.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I was talking about...

**The Chair:** Mr. Godin, let Mr. Séguin finish.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I am sorry, Madam Chair, but these five minutes belong to me. I just wanted to clarify one thing.

**The Chair:** I am sorry, but I must interrupt you because your five minutes are up.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** All right.

**The Chair:** We are coming to the end of our meeting, and I would just like to make a few remarks. Several witnesses have painted a picture for us of the difficulties facing community and not-for-profit organizations.

The point of the questions we asked you was not only to become more aware of the difficulties you face, but to go even further so that we can make recommendations to the minister, and through her, to the department. We have really fallen behind on our schedule. I added as much time as possible to what was planned, because I felt it was important that each of you have an opportunity to respond. You have different solutions to offer, each according to your own experience. The committee will move in this direction, and we will make our recommendations.

Please be assured that the texts you have presented will be translated, if that has not already been done, and distributed to all committee members.

Several of you have made very specific recommendations; we will read them and take them into account when we are drafting our report to the House of Commons and to the minister.

You did not have just five short minutes at the beginning. We have given you two hours to answer specific questions asked by committee members. This is often when that we get to the crux of the problem.

I thank you again for travelling here to meet with us.

The meeting is adjourned.

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