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—
Chair

Mr. Colin Mayes

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•(0910)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC)): I call to order the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for Tuesday, October 24, 2006.

Committee, before we go into the orders of the day I wish to report on a few items. The first one is of course that we will not be having a meeting on Thursday of this week.

Secondly, I have met with the clerk and the research staff, Madam Hurley. We talked somewhat about possible witnesses in the future, when we're dealing with Bill C-292. Madam Hurley has put together a list of a few suggestions, and we are circulating it.

It is not "the" list, just some suggestions put forward, without any influence by any political person. You are welcome to add to the list, and a memo has been sent out to each committee member. Please forward information to the clerk. I will be discussing this at the Tuesday meeting for 15 minutes.

On Tuesday we're going to deal with the presentation from Mr. GooGoo from 9 o'clock until 9:45; then we're going to take 15 minutes to talk about the list of possible witnesses for Bill C-292, and I will make sure it's only 15 minutes. Then we're going to deal with Madam Neville's motion from 10 o'clock to 11. Is that okay?

[Technical difficulty—Editor]

•(0915)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): What is suggested at this time for the members is a departure on Wednesday afternoon or evening, depending, and a return on Thursday afternoon as well. So everybody will be here around six on Thursday evening; that's for sure.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Is that a direct flight?

Mr. Steven Blaney: It's a direct flight from Gatineau to Roberval. It's a direct flight of about an hour and 15 minutes.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): To where the conference is? That's what we were trying to find out.

Mr. Steven Blaney: Yes. There might be some lack of communication.

The Chair: Maybe I could ask the parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Bruinooge, could you make sure that the minister's office makes certain that the person in charge of arranging this trip contacts all the members to make sure they're aware of what their needs are?

Just before we move on and get started here, we'll go to Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): I'd like to raise two points.

First, with respect to the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum, we clearly can't leave before the vote in the House. There will be a very important vote on Wednesday. If my colleagues opposite want to leave, that won't bother me too much. However, we clearly can't leave before the vote is held. In addition, we've planned that Mr. Gilles Duceppe, Mr. Michel Gauthier, my assistant and myself will take a chartered flight at 7:00 p.m., after the 5:45 p.m. vote.

Second, as regards Bill C-292, An Act to implement the Kelowna Accord, I wonder whether a meeting of the subcommittee or committee members should be convened to discuss the witnesses we want to hear. I'm not sure that 15 minutes will be enough to discuss that.

[English]

The Chair: I will move on, but Mr. Lemay, yes, I am only going to look for direction from the committee on whether they want the subcommittee to deal with the list of witnesses or want to do it as a committee of the whole in a subsequent meeting. We can make time for that, if you want to spend a half hour as a group looking through the witness list. If that's the direction the committee gives me, then we'll do it. If the committee's pleasure is that it be referred to the subcommittee, then we'll do that. That's the only thing we'll be dealing with in that 15 minutes.

Okay? We'll move on.

Thank you for your patience, witnesses. Today we have with us Roberta Jamieson, the president and chief executive officer of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, and Paulette Tremblay, director of post-secondary education.

Welcome, and thank you for being here today. We are going to allow you to have a ten-minute presentation, and then we'll follow with questions from the committee. Thank you.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson (President and Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation): *Sekoh. Skano.* Bonjour. Good morning.

As you've mentioned, I'm here this morning on behalf of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, which focuses on the educational opportunities of first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth.

I've been around this place long enough to know about the crushing burdens that you carry as members—your constituency demands, caucus demands, people who ask for your time, the business of the House, and something called a personal life. It would be so natural, so easy, to regard this as one more meeting of one more committee studying one more problem to be resolved, and on to the next. However, I hope I can persuade you and empower you to really take up the importance of today's subject, as I know you will. I ask that you grasp it firmly and not let it go until you've seen results from your committed efforts to create change.

Two decades ago I spent more than a year as an ex-officio member of this committee. I saw what could happen when committee members focused on a critical subject and reached consensus across party lines. Instead of bringing other views to the committee, they took the committee's recommendations back to caucus. With a report that has come to be called the Penner report, we achieved unanimous acceptance by all parties represented in the House, with that approach. My hope is that this committee will do the same as you focus on post-secondary education.

That's my constant preoccupation as CEO of the foundation: education, or enabling our youth to realize their potential. Implicit in education is the realization of human potential. The lack of this realization for first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth is truly one of Canada's greatest failings.

We don't need today to study the depth of the problem or the width of the gap that history has handed to this generation. I'm not going to overwhelm you today with a massive presentation on statistics, because we know that all the comparisons I could show you are shocking. We know that almost half of our young people are without even high school, compared to 31% of Canadians. We know that if we had the same percentage of university graduates as is present in the Canadian population, there would now be 72,000 more aboriginal graduates than we now have. That's the shortfall. For Inuit people, it is in fact a shortfall of 3,600 university graduates in order to have the same ratio as Canadians.

While the causes for me are obvious and sufficiently well known, perhaps not so obvious are the benefits to be gained from true investment, action, and partnerships. I was happy to see, on September 28 at Queen's University, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty speaking of post-secondary education as “one of the cornerstones of our success as a nation” for Canada. He talked about the need for providing, I quote, “predictable long-term funding for post-secondary education”.

• (0920)

The Chair: Can I interrupt you for one minute?

Mr. Lévesque, do you have a problem?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Chair, would it be possible to get copies of the documents in French? Right now, there's only one copy in English.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't know. Is there only one in...?

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: There is no document.

The Chair: There is no document available in English or French. This is an oral presentation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: I saw documents and I thought they were related to Ms. Jamieson's presentation.

[*English*]

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Do you want me to slow down? Would that be helpful?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque: No, that's fine.

It might be good to slow down a bit to enable the interpreters to do their work properly.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: So he talked about the need for providing “predictable long-term funding for post-secondary education” to “train our future researchers, scientists and innovators”. He also noted the severe shortage of skilled labour, the need for better cooperation between governments, and the need to eliminate barriers to higher education. These remarks about the importance of post-secondary education for Canada's future are equally important for the future of first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, if not more so.

Although the task is certainly daunting—and it is daunting—to address this, we must do what we can do in our time, in our generation. It can be this committee's heritage and its niche in history to put this into motion.

I can tell you from my experience as a student on reserve from grade one through high school, as a parent of a student in the same system, as the elected chief of the same community, as a passionate advocate of change for our situation in Canada, and now as president and CEO at the foundation, that conversion of potential to success to achievement won't just happen. It requires commitment, hard work, and a spirit that just won't give up. It also requires that we work together, and I'm hoping the committee sees the foundation I represent as a powerful ingredient in realizing the changes you would like to see.

The bold mandate that we have is to encourage, empower, inspire, and provide assistance so that first nations, Métis, and Inuit youths can convert their tremendous potential, their aspirations, and their dreams into solid achievement and brighter futures. We make it possible for them to contribute their gifts to their communities, to Canada, and to the world.

What is our core focus? Providing scholarships for our youths so that they can continue their education. We provide scholarships in a variety of fields: post-secondary education, health careers, fine arts, and also for cultural projects. We bring together public-sector—that is to say, government—and private-sector resources, and we carefully invest those resources to achieve a maximum of tangible and intangible results.

The foundation is a registered national charity, and the only one in Canada that provides educational support for first nations, Métis, and Inuit youths. We receive money from corporate donors, from first nations and our organizations, and from federal and provincial governments, and we often use resources from one sector to leverage funds from the other sector. We also proudly administer more than \$14 million in endowments and trusts, for which our youths are the beneficiaries. Outside the federal government, we're the largest supporter of education for first nations, Métis, and Inuit youths.

Since 1988, the foundation has awarded \$23.5 million in grants. To give you a sense of the numbers that we work with, I'm just going to take last year, 2005-06. We received 1,129 applications and made awards to 83% of the applicants—that is to say, to 934 recipients. Of these recipients, 53% were in post-secondary education, such as social science, education, business, law, science, technical studies, and engineering; 29% per cent were in health career fields; 18% were in fine arts or cultural projects. Of those, 35 engineers received assistance, 39 lawyers, 87 in science, 19 in technical studies, and I could go on. That's the good side.

Last year more than \$2.8 million were awarded, up from \$1.9 million the previous year. That's great news. There's a downside, however, and here it is. The support requested was over \$8.6 million. We could only meet 32.5% of the amount requested. As well, despite increased education costs over nearly two decades, we are awarding now less per person than we were then.

● (0925)

Because we feel the need to stretch out what we have to assist more students, we take into account in awarding funds to students four criteria. The awards are done by jury. We look at demonstrated financial need and their own contribution to education costs and those of their first nation, if that's available to them. We look at their evidence of their involvement in and contribution to aboriginal community. We look at their evidence of suitability and commitment to their field of study, including requiring letters of reference, and we look at their demonstrated academic performance and merit in awarding these scholarships.

It goes without saying, but I will say so, that if we had had more money, we would have gone after even more applicants, would have responded to the applicants we got, and would have been able to provide basically more assistance to the students. We've monitored and tracked our students and asked them what their barriers are to post-secondary education. And they've told us, frankly, financial assistance.

I believe the foundation is much more than another competitor for the federal dollar. We've demonstrated that we improve the return on investment in education of first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth. We get results for the money. We nurture, support, encourage, and do all the things that investors do to realize return on their investments. We're able to use federal money as leverage to bring in more from the private sector, as I've mentioned, and to mix that with provincial investment and even individuals who support the foundation. We're also fully accountable. We demonstrate outcomes, concrete results for the money spent. I've mentioned what we awarded to 934 recipients last year. By the end of this year, the foundation will have given to more than 6,000 recipients over our life. Since 1999, 30% of

our students have been in their final year of study each year, so that tells you they're graduating. We are now tracking even more closely, and I'm happy to speak in the question-and-answer session on our evaluation efforts and what we know and what we don't know.

We also provide transparency, financially. I invite you to have a look at our website—www.naaf.com. You will see our annual reports, our audited statements, and so on. We could do a lot more, with great benefit, if we had more resources.

Why should Canada be interested in providing more resources? On the one hand, Canada's economy is facing frightening labour shortages in almost every field, and we know that. We know that Canada is relying on immigration to keep the economy going, to provide services to an aging population. On the other hand, we know first nations, Métis, and Inuit people nationally are Canada's fastest-growing sector of the population, facing themselves frightening unemployment, under-employment, poverty, and unrealized productivity and potential.

There are two implications from this pair of circumstances. One is that each set of problems provides a solution to the other problem. Instead of two problems, I believe we have two solutions. The other implication is that if Canada relies on immigration to solve its labour problems, without dealing with the employment needs of its fastest-growing demographic sector, and if Canada leaves first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth on the sidelines for another generation, while it recruits internationally for workers, that's a recipe for both tragedy and trouble.

Part of the answer is the foundation. And I'm asking that this committee recommend that the government use the foundation's capabilities to convert problems into solutions. We've been very successful, as I've mentioned, in bringing together public and private sectors to leverage opportunity, to provide for our young people.

● (0930)

But the foundation does even more than that, and takes other lateral approaches in achieving results. We're changing images. We're changing minds. We're demolishing the negative image that currently exists, and the stereotypes, and creating new ways of seeing ourselves and others, showing what happens when our intellectual and creative potential has the opportunity to develop.

We do the annual achievement awards, for which we are well known, televised nationally on Global and APTN. March 16, 2007, Edmonton: please mark your calendars.

That gala provides a double benefit. Not only do Canadians get an education about what first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth—all our people—have to offer, but our people see positive role models. We're inspired, and we believe we have a future to grasp. We hold up our scientists, our healers, our environmentalists, and our peacemakers to show what we can contribute to the world in our own way and within our own identities. In seeking this individual achievement, we also seek it in the name of collective affirmation as indigenous peoples.

We focus a lot on post-secondary education, which is what you are looking at, but let me tell you, we are also working hard at especially the high school level. Too many of our young people are not completing high school. We do so with career fairs. The next one is in Yellowknife on November 25, and then in Halifax on February 1. We bring together young people with role models to motivate, educate, inspire, and help them believe they have a future to grasp.

We also take into the classrooms role models and modules that will show our young people the smorgasbord, the opportunities they have. We have wonderful modules in justice and in health, and in careers in the railway. More modules are in the making, produced in partnership with Canadian corporations and the public sector.

Then there is Rivers to Success. I don't have time to tell you about that program today, although I would love to. We're going to pilot it. We're shaping the pilot for Nunavut. Rivers is about reclaiming kids who've dropped out of high school, bringing them back into the fold, preparing them for trades, for post-secondary education, for university—for whatever their dream is.

Again, it's collaboration that we work on at the foundation. We're not reinventing programs. We're not providing another layer of services. We are maximizing what's there and putting it to the use of our young people.

We work with all those who are willing to help, those who are opting to take charge of our lives, to take ownership of our well-being and our future, and to make ourselves accountable to our children and to their future. That's what I'm doing at the foundation at this point in my life.

We understand that problems won't be dealt with, nor potential liberated, if we just throw enough money at it. We get that. But there is no doubt that we must have our resources to fulfill our mandate.

We know that we are only one instrument in a multi-faceted circumstance, but I tell you, we are a promising one. We are operating at a critical juncture in our history. If our students struggle through their childhood to get to the point where they can go on to advanced training, advanced education, and then find that the resources aren't there for them to move on, the tragedy is so painful we simply cannot allow it to happen. In Canada today, no first nation, Métis, or Inuit young person should be prevented from going on to post-secondary training or education because of lack of financial resources.

I wish the committee strength, health, clarity of vision, and patience in taking leadership on behalf of Canada to ensure that the challenge is met squarely and thoroughly.

• (0935)

We ask the committee to recommend to Parliament that the foundation be used as a means of assuring that every first nation, Inuit, and Métis student accepted for post-secondary studies has the means to realize that dream.

I'm pleased to answer questions, and to be even more concrete in my recommendations. Mr. Chair, thank you for your attention. I look forward to the dialogue with members.

The Chair: Thank you for the presentation.

I made a commitment to Mr. Mendelson that I would be sharp at 10 o'clock, but I think it would be only fair, because of the 20 minutes we were delayed, to take 10 minutes off each presentation. So we'll go until 10:10 and then Mr. Mendelson will speak.

Madam Neville.

• (0940)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you, Ms. Jamieson, for your presentation and your passion.

I'm going to take you up on your offer for more concrete information. I'd like to have further information on the success rates and your longitudinal studies. What have they shown you about the students you've graduated with?

I would also like to follow up on your recommendation at the end, to find out exactly what you're looking for.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: First of all, let me say that I'm delighted to be joined here by Dr. Paulette Tremblay, who has not only a doctorate in education but also a masters in evaluation. When I came to the foundation, it was important to me to focus on evaluation and ensure accountability.

The foundation is those days did not have the resources to do this. More recently, we have acquired additional resources to do the kind of tracking and monitoring we think is important. We did tracking for 2005-06 in the health area, and we have a statistical profile of our applicants with respect to gender, aboriginal affiliation, province, residence, scholarships, educational level, barriers they've encountered, supports they need to be successful, how they feel about our service, employment prospects, who they're working with, whether they're working in their field of study, whether they're working in the communities, record of volunteer work, and whether they're working for the government.

I didn't want to sort of throw all that on the table, but we are tracking and monitoring this. We did so last year for health careers. We are doing it this year for all post-secondary fields of study, and I dare say we are the only ones in the country doing this kind of tracking. It's critical to plan.

We are beginning the quantitative tracking. We'd love to have longitudinal studies; they're needed. We simply do not have the resources to do most longitudinal studies. We have some. We have produced some reports, which I'd be happy to provide to you at the chair's request.

The Chair: We would like to request a copy of that tracking. If it could be provided to the committee, we could perhaps make reference to it in the final report.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: We would be happy to.

We do the analysis by gender—from 1999 to 2006—in the area of study. By province, we can tell you what funds are going to Métis, first nations, and Inuit over time. So we are tracking.

We need to do more. I am very keen to track, especially at the end. We know that 30% of our students are returning to us. From 1999 to 2006, every year, 30% of our students have been in their final year. They're succeeding. They're graduating. There are high marks. But we need to follow them even beyond that.

To be more concrete about my recommendation, I would like to see a serious allocation of funds to address first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth opportunities in post-secondary education. I don't think it would be too ambitious to look at a two-part allocation of funds: one, a set-aside fund; and two, a pledge to provide additional funds contingent on the private sector stepping up to match the contribution.

I would like to see a \$100-million allocation for first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth scholarships and bursaries—not all endowed. You can only award the interest when it's all endowed. I'd like to see some funds endowed and some not. I would also like to see an additional \$50 million pledged, provided the private sector matches it. I am fully energized to get those matching dollars.

You may also wish to invite the provincial government into the mix, or you may wish to earmark existing funds that provinces receive. However you want to do that, the politics with the jurisdictions is yours. My worry is that much-needed funds get to our young people.

I think we have an excellent and demonstrated track record at the foundation in managing the funds we've received over time.

● (0945)

Hon. Anita Neville: Thank you.

Do we have more time?

The Chair: You have only one minute.

Hon. Anita Neville: I'll pass.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Ms. Jamieson, I have an enormous amount of respect for the work you're doing. My questions are extremely specific; you'll see.

Why don't we hear about your foundation in Quebec? Is it because everything is only in English? If so, why isn't it translated into French? In the notes that were forwarded to us, we see "*Blueprint for the Future*" and "*Rivers to Success*". As far as I know, that's not in French. That's not a criticism; it's a comment.

There are Aboriginal people in Quebec who need help and are not aware of your program. Since I knew you were going to appear before us today, I did some research. I'm sorry to tell you that your foundation isn't known, or is very little known, in Quebec because everything's in English.

What recommendation can we make so that French translations are made of the documents that might concern Quebec or, in any case, so that action taken in Quebec on the subject can be known?

[English]

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Thank you very for the question.

I can tell you that the website is available in French and in English. The materials, the applications for scholarships, are available in French as well, as is the annual report. I can tell you, though, that it is a tremendous challenge for us, because it's very expensive. The resources that are available to us enable us to do our materials now, our written materials, in French. We have made that pledge, and we have sought specific funding to do that, but there is much more to be done.

We do receive applications from Quebec. I can't give you the numbers, but I will be happy to after this and communicate with you directly or through the clerk, as you wish. We do receive applications in French. We do provide answers to students' questions and access to a French-speaking individual to assist us in translating and communicating with students, but there is no question that there is more that needs to be done.

The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards themselves have never been held east of Ontario. I intend to change that picture. We are exploring right now the opportunity to do that as early as 2008. It may or may not be possible, but we must reach areas that have been traditionally underserved. We are a national foundation, which means we have an obligation to serve throughout Canada, and I do take that seriously.

Our plan this year, Dr. Tremblay tells me, is to have specific outreach in Quebec occurring this year.

Go ahead, Dr. Tremblay.

Mrs. Paulette Tremblay (Director, Post-Secondary Education, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation): We've been invited by the first nations education steering committee in Quebec to make presentations to them and provide materials, and we are just waiting for a date, because we've been approached to do so.

● (0950)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I'm going to give you an idea. My question will be very specific. You want concrete things, so I'm going to give you concrete things.

On October 26, from 8:30 a.m. until noon, the theme addressed at the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum, which will be held in Mashteuiatsh, near Roberval, will be education.

Have you been invited? Can you make it so you are invited? All the chiefs of the Quebec First Nations will be there. I think it's important that you be there. I want to say that I don't question the importance of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, which you head. On the contrary, I want it to expand and to be more present in Quebec, because I know Aboriginal Francophones who should have had access to it. However, the people in the Aboriginal communities in my riding aren't aware of your organization.

So I've told you about the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum.

Second, do you monitor the results of the students to whom you award scholarships? For example, can you tell us whether, in Ontario, for example, you have helped 100 young Aboriginals over the past five years to become...?

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Yes.

Mr. Marc Lemay: Can you send us those figures?

That's very interesting. I'd really like to get those figures. Here we're talking about postsecondary education, but we know that the drop-out risk among young Aboriginals is higher in Secondary III, that is between 15 and 18 years of age.

I saw your *Rivers to Success* program. It should be translated into French and filed in Quebec, with the consent of the members of the First Nations of Quebec. It's an extremely important and interesting program. Do you think it could be available in French and distributed to members of the First Nations of Quebec?

[English]

The Chair: We have only a very little time.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: I thank the member for his question.

I've taken note of October 26; that's a couple of days away. We certainly will do our very best to, if not attend, certainly obtain some information about this event.

I'd also say to the member that it is a priority of mine to do outreach. We've gone from two years ago having no materials in French to now insisting that all our public documents, and certainly our programs, are translated into French. The *Rivers to Success* program is in its formative stage, but I can commit to the member that the materials we make available on that will be in French. We welcome the opportunity to work with the member and any first nations that he would like to recommend to contact us. We would be very happy to do that.

Finally, I will undertake to provide you with the statistics that are specific to the Quebec region.

Are any of the career modules that we have produced thus far in French? I would like to make them available in French. Again, it's a matter of resources, which you may wish to put forward in the committee's report, that we be fully funded to ensure that all of our programs are available throughout the country. We are doing so as much as we can.

We're also doing specific outreach in the Arctic to ensure our services are available to Inuit youth.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

I'm going to go back to the speaking notes from October 19, from the departments that came before the committee. They're actually quoting from our next guest that their feeling is that one of the main reasons for the lack of success at the post-secondary level is the

capacity of the K-12 system to get graduates into post-secondary education. There are a couple of issues for me around that.

One issue is that what we've heard from first nations, Métis, and Inuit from coast to coast to coast is that they already have people who have the ability to get into post-secondary, whether it's trades or vocational, technical or university, but they aren't able to do so, or when they do get in, they are unable to complete, for a variety of reasons. If we increase the capacity of the K-12 system and pump more students into a system that already seems like it can't accommodate everybody who is interested and willing....

I wonder if you could comment on the number of students that you're not able to serve and what's missing in the post-secondary system to support students once they're in the system.

•(0955)

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Say the last part again.

Ms. Jean Crowder: What is missing in the post-secondary system to support students once they get into that system? I know that students drop out and are unable to complete, or they take longer to complete.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Thank you for the question.

I can point to last year, when we received applications from 1,129 people—

Ms. Jean Crowder: Sorry, Ms. Jamieson, I know those are the numbers you received. But do you have any sense of the students who may not even apply?

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: No.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Because I think that's the other issue, that we lose students who either don't know about it or—

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: I have a sense, but I can't give you any authoritative statistics on it. There are many more than the number of applications we receive. I would not be overstating it to say that there are thousands of first nations, Métis, and Inuit young people who would like post-secondary assistance, whether it's in trades or at university or colleges, who are unable to access it. There is no question in my mind.

There are many thousands of young people who need assistance who have dropped out of high school, and that's the biggest challenge. That's the biggest labour force challenge that Canada has—first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth who don't finish high school.

I can tell you, also, that specifically the barriers.... Let me share one other statistic that Dr. Tremblay has reminded me of. When I toured the western Arctic last year to ensure awareness and equal access to the foundation's programs for the Inuit in that area, I heard over and over again that there needs to be support for one-year programs, and there is not. It does not exist. So young people are falling through the cracks there.

Our current programs provide assistance for two years plus. They were asking me to revise our own programs to pick up the one-year, as well. There is no question that that needs to be done, and there is no question that there is both an appetite for that and support among our private sector sponsors to help us with more opportunities for the one-year and less-than-one-year trades and bursaries.

We need to tap into this support, and we are working as fast as we can to come up with a plan to do that. But I need the federal government, as well, willing to be at the table to work with us on that.

What happens to them when they get into post-secondary? I'll share this with you, and again, I can provide this to the committee. The barriers they encountered when completing their program in the health area, they said, were financial strain and pressures. That was number one. Number two was being away from home, family, and friends. Number three was family strain and balancing demands. Number four was academic pressures. Number five was the necessity to work. Number six was medical issues and health and wellness, and finally, there were cultural barriers.

What do they say helped them get through? Support of family and friends; financial support; institutional support, such as dedicated faculty, teachers, and staff; aboriginal access programs; aboriginal programs and services; peer networks; study groups; and mentors. And again, I'm very happy to make this study available in its entirety to the committee.

• (1000)

Ms. Jean Crowder: If you could, I think that would be very helpful, because it has some concrete information.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to move on, if you don't mind, to the government side so we have an opportunity for each one of the parties to question.

We'll go to Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Jamieson and Madam Tremblay, for your presentation. It was very informative, and I just want to thank you for your very positive outlook on life and the approach you're taking to this challenging issue.

It seems to me that you have a keen sense of affiliating your organization with the business community, and I think that has also likely shaped many of the principles under which you operate your foundation in terms of being efficient and operating from that perspective. I think that's a safe assumption, at least based on what I've heard from you.

My questioning will likely go along the lines of where, perhaps, we are in terms of post-secondary funding for first nations students. At the department level, we had some witnesses in our previous meeting, actually, from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and we asked them some questions relating to the parcel of funds that had been allocated, on an annual basis, towards funding first nations students at the post-secondary level. For that roughly \$300 million, unfortunately, there is nowhere near the amount of tracking that you have in your successful organization, although what you have is quite small relative to that amount.

My question to you would be how your organization compares in the sense of providing tracking data. And what is your sense of where the current funding is right now that is being delivered by the federal government to first nations? How do your two organizations compare when a student applies for funding?

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: I think I'll leave the committee and others to evaluate the INAC system. Internally, I can only say that many of the students who come to us come despite being provided with some assistance through the department.

For example, the department allocates funds to first nations that provide post-secondary assistance to students. We ask our students to attempt to access that before they come to us. We have many who report to us and demonstrate that either they have accessed inadequate funds or there has been no funding left.

I'm reaching back to my days as chief, which is not that long ago. But I can tell you that in my own community at Six Nations, where I was chief until 2004, I had a full 400 students who were accepted for post-secondary, in my final year as chief, who we could not fund.

I'm going to ask Dr. Tremblay to add some things to this as well. I don't think it's an overstatement to say the funds aren't there.

Secondly, the importance of tracking is critical and vital. We have to demonstrate to our sponsors that we're keenly aware of it. You're absolutely right.

But whether it's public sector or private sector, we know we're accountable for every dollar, because it's our kids and it's their future. If we don't manage the money wisely, we deprive them. I carry that burden very seriously and very responsibly, and the foundation does so throughout.

There's no question that the kind of tracking we're talking about should be readily available right across the country.

I'm happy to talk to the department about how they might do a better job, or indeed manage additional funds, and how to do the job we're doing times 10 or times 100.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: You make light of the fact that perhaps the funding needs to be managed through another medium. But I think there is validity to that point in the sense that we're currently shipping off \$300 million to regions and they are then distributing it to bands and council.

In theory, they can spend the money as part of their overall budget in terms of whatever project is necessary. Of course, I think many are putting that money into the hands of students, but the bottom line is there is no tracking.

I think some out-of-the-box thinking on this isn't necessarily a bad idea.

• (1005)

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: There are also some limitations to the funding coming from the department that you should be aware of.

I'm going to ask Dr. Tremblay to speak to this, if I may.

Mrs. Paulette Tremblay: The problem is not simple. It's very complex when you're talking about first nations, Inuit, and Metis.

Some of the limitations at the community level would be that for post-secondary education programs they get to interpret how to apply those dollars at that level. Sometimes the majority of the dollars go to undergrad students who are in first, second, third, and fourth year, and little to no funds go to graduate support for people in masters or doctoral programs. We know there are waiting lists across the country to access post-secondary education funding.

There is very little funding through the program for trades or programs where they have to do upgrading because their education isn't perhaps at the required level. They can't compete in a medical doctoral program because their marks in science, biology, or math aren't high enough, and they are automatically screened out. It's a multiple-level problem.

I can tell you that when we track, we know.

For first nations, over a six-year period from 1999-2006, we had 1,723 applications. We awarded that to first nations that receive post-secondary education funding. Our agreement with INAC requires these students to first apply to the bands, before we can allocate the money, and we require a letter. It's additional funds that they need from us.

Remember, this is the cream of the crop. We're getting small numbers for many reasons.

For Metis, where access is—

The Chair: I'm going to have to cut you off.

Mrs. Paulette Tremblay: I'm sorry.

The Chair: I'm sorry, but we're just out of time.

I'm just going to allow one question. Mr. Russell said he has one short or concise question. I'm just going to allow him that and then we're going to—

Mr. Marc Lemay: Do you believe that?

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): I want to thank you very much for the presentation.

Ms. Jamieson, it's good to see you again in this particular venue.

I just have a couple of questions.

The Chair: One.

Mr. Todd Russell: They'll be very quick.

What portion of your funding goes to first-year students? Because I think that's critical in terms of getting people in and seeing them go through. And what portion of your funding has been raised by non-federal government sources so far?

The Chair: Wow!

A concise answer, please.

Mr. Todd Russell: He comes with a speech.

Ms. Roberta Jamieson: On the first question, I'll undertake to provide the answer to it.

As for the second question, of the \$2.8 million we awarded last year, aside from money from the trusts, over \$500,000 million came from the private sector. I can give a more fulsome breakdown if you

wish, but that's the fast answer. We need more; it's growing as we have more corporate people coming onboard.

Chair, I would be remiss if I did not formally table this document with the committee today. I do have it available in both languages. We are making it available through the chair to the committee.

One of the things the foundation does, as you know, is to provide achievement awards to outstanding people in a variety of careers. This last year, we, along with the Kenny Family Foundation and the University of British Columbia—that is, private sector donors—fully financed the holding of a think tank that brought together our education laureates from across Canada to talk about what they thought were the priority directions for education in Canada for first nations, Métis, and Inuit youth. They gathered together and thought long and hard, without reinventing past reports. They were future-oriented and brought a sense of urgency to the need to address education issues, and they asked me if I would bring this document to the committee and table it with the committee. I do so today and suggest that you may wish to consider at some point calling them to appear as well.

We had the brain trust of Canada in aboriginal education, and representation from the national aboriginal organizations. They were all invited, and many of them came. So you have, virtually hot off the press, as I just got this last night, their thinking, their priorities, and their sense of urgency and thoughts on the future of education and what the committee might wish to take into account in preparing its report.

Thank you very much.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you for your presentations, Mrs. Jamieson and Mrs. Tremblay.

I just want to encourage the committee to.... I attended one of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation awards functions in Edmonton, the last time I was there, and it is really worth while; it's quite encouraging to see the accomplishments of aboriginal people in Canada.

So thank you for your presentation.

I'm going to break for two minutes, and then we'll have Mr. Mendelson presenting.

• (1010)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1015)

The Chair: We reconvene to allow Mr. Mendelson an opportunity to speak.

We have with us Michael Mendelson, policy analyst from the Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Chair, could I just make a statement?

The Chair: Certainly.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I think this last session has given us ample evidence that we need to give our witnesses more time. We didn't get any chance to ask questions on this side. I would suggest, with respect, that from here on in we try to create a little more time for our witnesses to give them the chance to give their concerns and to give us a chance to enter into dialogue.

The Chair: I appreciate that, but the chair was also very lenient with the presentation. The presentation went on for 20 minutes, but was supposed to be 10 minutes. So that ate up some of your opportunity for questions, but I felt that the presentation was more important than your questions.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I don't argue with that at all.

The Chair: But I agree and will take this into consideration when we do further scheduling.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, could we perhaps even schedule another meeting for some more analysis of some of the things that have been brought to our attention—for instance, this document that's just been brought to our attention? As suggested, could we maybe bring in some of these witnesses to another meeting?

The Chair: I would ask that any members who have any suggestions such as this refer them to the clerk, and he'll make me aware of them and I will ask for your guidance.

Thank you for your patience, Mr. Mendelson, and welcome to our committee.

Mr. Michael Mendelson (Policy Analyst, Caledon Institute of Social Policy): It's my pleasure to be here.

I know time is short, so I'm going to try to be as quick as possible, and have some opportunity for dialogue.

I've passed out a little slide presentation, which is based on a longer report. The longer report, which I highly recommend to you, as the author, is available free on the Caledon Institute website.

Let me take you through some of the highlights of the slide show that I've handed out, and then we'll have a discussion.

In the slide show I begin with a discussion of some of the demographics. The slide show itself I think is available in both languages. I won't spend a lot of time on demographics, because presumably you're familiar with these. I'm discussing in my presentation data empirical evidence from the censuses, the censuses in 2001 and 1996 in particular. My data are about what is called the aboriginal identity population; that is, those persons who identify themselves as aboriginal when asked in the census or who are members of a band or who are first nations members. That's approximately a million people in Canada.

The aboriginal identity population as a percentage of population is on the second slide. I think it's important to note, in terms of understanding where the social and economic impacts of the success or the lack of success of the aboriginal population will be in Canada, to understand where the population concentrations are. It is very much in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, as you'll see in my presentation, much of the worst results are also in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. So we have both the highest proportion in population and the highest concentration of challenge.

The next few slides address some important demographic data and some of the mythology that we hear. The slide on page 5 shows the future aboriginal workforce among the provinces that is between the ages of 15 and 65. We sometimes hear that the aboriginal workforce will be 50% in Saskatchewan. That's not quite true, but it will be a very large proportion of the population in Saskatchewan—closer to 20%, a little less than 20%.

Similarly, we also hear a myth that there's mass migration off reserve. I suppose that's based on anecdotal observations. On the slide on page 6, I show the data from the 1996 and 2001 censuses, and it's very clear that there is not mass migration off reserve; in fact, that's far from the case. In fact, I would say the growth on reserve is about 54,000 people, in absolute terms, between the two censuses, and that growth is most likely natural growth, if I can call it that, rather than an increasing number of people identifying themselves as aboriginal.

If you look at growth due to population and demographics, I would say that probably your largest growth is on reserve. It is definitely not shrinking. Where there is some shrinkage, in percentage terms, is in the rural areas of Canada, which is reflective of the situation generally and demographically in Canada.

Also, on the next slide.... I don't know how many times people have said to me, "Do you know where the largest urban concentration of aboriginals in Canada, in any city, is?", and I say, "Where?" They say, "Toronto", and I say, "No, that's not the case". There are 14 cities with an aboriginal population over 5,000, and by far the largest urban concentration is in Winnipeg. Next it's Edmonton, and then Vancouver.

• (1020)

In percentage terms it's a little different, obviously. I think it's important to understand urban concentrations because a lot of the dynamics of new cultural development as well as a lot of the challenges in terms of issues of adaptation, etc., are being felt and will be felt in those cities, particularly Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

I have a few slides on socio-economic status. I'm not going to spend any time on those except to say that they are, unfortunately, what you would expect; that is, that the socio-economic status of aboriginal people is, by most indicators, generally worse—much lower—than that of the general population. But there is one important proviso, and that is, if you look at the aboriginal populations in the east, essentially Toronto and east, you'll find that those populations, by socio-economic indicator, do not have the lowest socio-economic indicators of any population. In other words, if you look at some of the recent immigrant groups, for example, in Toronto, or if you look at, unfortunately, some of the black communities in Toronto, you'll find that the socio-economic indicators are lower than those of the aboriginal community. It does not stand out as a community with a significant substantial difference that you can just see by looking at the data. That's not true in the west. In the west the population clearly with the lowest socio-economic indicators is the aboriginal population. I think that makes a significant difference.

Going on to education, which is the subject we're interested in, and trying to be quicker, I look at three indicators from the census. Those are, first, the failure to complete high school—that's a negative, and the more who do that, the worse it is—then the success in completing either non-university post-secondary education, or, the third indicator, completing university post-secondary education. Page 11 or slide 11 shows the estimated rate of failure to complete high school. You can see that this is very high among the aboriginal population. It remained high in 2001. In fact, the gap between the aboriginal population and the non-aboriginal population really didn't change much. The next page, slide 12, looks at non-university post-secondary education, and there's a positive story to tell here, and it is that the aboriginal population is getting close to the non-aboriginal population in post-secondary education, almost at parity. We'll see that there is even some better news when you look at that on a regional breakdown. We'll see that on a later slide. However, with respect to the third indicator, university post-secondary education, as we've just heard from Roberta and I'm sure you've heard many times before, things are not good at all. The completion by the aboriginal population of university is very low compared to the non-aboriginal population.

These results are disconcerting. So I say to myself, it's one thing to look at the population aged 15 to 65; what happens if I look at the population aged 20 to 24, just to pick a young segment? You'd expect that population to be most influenced by the changes we've had in the last few years in the education system. The answer, unfortunately, is not positive. Slide 14 shows the results for just the population aged 20 to 24, total population versus aboriginal population. You can see, particularly on failure to complete high school, that among the aboriginal population today aged 20 to 24, the failure to complete high school remains over 40%, which I found quite astonishing.

•(1025)

I'm going to skip over some of the next ones, which show some of the regional breakdown, except I want to point to one slide that I think is critically important, particularly in respect of INAC's responsibilities. That's slide 16. This is the high school completion rate on reserve. You can see that it is startling. This is the failure to complete high school for the population aged 20 to 24—not the whole population, just the population aged 20 to 24—in the 2001 census. So these are young adults who went to school in the 1980s and 1990s, not in the 1950s. You can see that in Manitoba the on-reserve failure to complete is around 70%. In the paper I've written, I've described this as a social disaster much like a hurricane or another kind of social disaster, except that it's taking a long time to happen and it's happening in slow motion.

Slide 17 shows the gap in non-university post-secondary education, broken down by region. I'd just point out that in the east, aboriginal students are completing non-university post-secondary education more than some of the non-aboriginal students.

I want to skip to some of the main findings that were interesting, in slide 20. I want to stress that this is data-driven. These are my findings but not my data; this is the census data. I said okay, we know there are way fewer aboriginal students graduating from post-secondary, completing post-secondary, but what happens if we look just at high school students and compare only high school students

among the aboriginal population and the non-aboriginal population? It turns out that if we do that, the success in completing some form of post-secondary education is about the same. Those results were pretty robust. I looked at them statistically in a number of ways: by region, which is shown in a little graph on next slide, by gender, and so on—and they remained there. The difference is that if you look at the little bars on slide 20, both populations of aboriginal graduates, about 75%, about three-quarters, went on to complete some form of post-secondary education, but much lower for university.

To conclude, the first thing I'd like to say is that I would like this research to be investigated a little more deeply. I'm using aggregate data, not micro-data. There's a lot that could be challenged. When I've given this kind of presentation to others, particularly researchers, I've said "Get off your butts and do some decent research, because maybe I'm wrong and it's too important a finding and needs to be corroborated by other researchers." I'm quite willing to be found to be wrong, but I don't think I am.

In my view, what this means is that every single aboriginal student who gets into a post-secondary education institution is vitally important to Canada and to their communities, an incredible opportunity to make a contribution to our future. I hate to see any student drop out or be lost. I'm not trying to say it's one versus the other. I don't think we have the luxury of that kind of trade-off. But given the reality that this data seems to indicate, if we want to get parity in post-secondary education, the only way we're going to get there is through kindergarten to grade 12. The only way we're going to get there is by getting more kids graduating from high school. Otherwise the pool of students who can get into post-secondary is simply too small.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chair, having gone over my time by a few minutes.

•(1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mendelson.

Madame Karetak-Lindell, please.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Thank you, Mr. Mendelson, for your presentation.

I have a couple of questions. I don't know if you can cover them all.

While I certainly agree with you that we need to get more students graduating from high school, I think there needs to be more of an overall plan of connecting why we want them to go to post-secondary education.

Have you examined the reasons that first nations and aboriginal people are having some success at the post-secondary education level? Specifically, does your research identify those reasons for success, and also the reasons for a lack of success at all levels of first nations and aboriginal education, kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education?

Mr. Michael Mendelson: The answer is that this research did not look at the reasons for success or failure. Some other work I've done might reflect on that. Anecdotally, my sister taught for 30 years in the inner city in Winnipeg, but this research does not look at reasons. In my paper, I have a policy map of barriers for people, but we know that the drop-out issue starts about grades eight or nine, and that's where we start running into problems, both in the cities and on reserve.

While I have the opportunity, I want to stress that while I focus attention on reserves, because of that last graphic on page 16, if you look at the city of Winnipeg itself, about 48% of aboriginal students are failing to complete high school. So it's not much better in the cities either.

I don't really have an answer to your question.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: That takes me to my next point. We were throwing a lot of statistics around, and it looks like gloom and doom, but I don't think it presents a fair picture of what the balance is. We're just throwing statistics out, but we don't really get into some of the systemic difficulties that explain why we have those statistics. It's very difficult for us to be seeing a one-moment picture and not really the whole picture.

I would ask if your analysis identified the percentage of high school learners who complete post-secondary education, also by the types of institutions, whether it's mainstream versus indigenous institutes of higher learning?

Mr. Michael Mendelson: That's an important question, and it's not one I've looked at, although I've discussed it. I've had a lively discussion with other researchers, and I've been encouraging other researchers to look at this kind of information.

I want to say a few things. One is that I've tried to take an objective look at the situation, based on the empirical data. It raises many questions I would like other people to look into, to research, and understand. It's important to do that. It's important to try to take an objective look at what the reality is, as best we can, even though we might not like some of it. I did not start out having any idea that there was a 70% failure rate on reserves in Manitoba—I'm from Manitoba, by the way, Winnipeg—and I was astonished and incredibly discouraged to hear that, but it's not all doom and gloom to say this. The non-university post-secondary sector is doing well, and that's something we can learn, and high school graduates are doing well. From the census data, we know the kids who graduate from high school are going on at the same rate to complete some post-secondary education, essentially achieving equity. That is a positive. It's not all gloom and doom, but it is difficult. It's a difficult empirical reality to confront, but I didn't make up the data.

• (1035)

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Was there any relationship between success and the proximity of where they went to school? In some other presentations we've seen, the farther you are away from where you come from and where you went to school, there's probably a better chance you're going to drop out.

Mr. Michael Mendelson: This is a pretty limited piece of research, but it's an important piece of research. It opens up questions. I'm saying to myself and others, here's the situation, how can we explain it? We know that statistically the geographic proximity to a post-secondary educational institution is one of the factors that determines success or failure in the general population. So, yes, I'm sure this is one of the important factors as well, although that wouldn't be to high school, necessarily.

The Chair: Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Thank you for those figures, Mr. Mendelson. My first question will be very specific. Where did you get those statistics that you presented to us today?

You'll understand why I ask you that question once you've answered it.

[English]

Mr. Michael Mendelson: You'll be surprised to know that all these data are available free on the Internet through the Statistics Canada website. If you look, you can find it. It's free of charge and it's all aggregate data. I would like researchers to go deeper than I have by looking at what's called micro-data. I didn't have the capacity, the time, or the finances to do that, but all the data I've used are available for free.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: Can you go to slide 6, where you say that massive migration off-reserve is a myth. What if I told you that your figures contradict those of the department, which we have obtained? They say there is an off-reserve migration.

What do we do now? I'm almost certain that the departmental people are in the field, but I would like to hear you say it.

[English]

Mr. Michael Mendelson: I would have to see the department's data to know. I haven't seen it, but I have seen two studies by Statistics Canada of off-reserve migration, and they both came to the same conclusion that I have.

I've not seen the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada study you refer to. I'd be surprised if that's what they said, though, because as far as I know they've never said that in the past. But maybe there's a peculiar situation in Quebec that I don't know about. You've got me at a loss, because I haven't seen the study you're referring to.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I read your statistics. I understand your presentation.

Am I correctly analyzing the situation if I say that, if students live off-reserve, they have better chances of completing high school than if they live on a reserve? If the answer to that question is yes, how can we ensure that young Aboriginal students complete high school on the reserves or in their northern communities?

• (1040)

[English]

Mr. Michael Mendelson: That is the question. As to whether you have a higher probability of completing high school if you live off reserve, the answer is yes. But it depends where you live. In Winnipeg and other cities in the west, there's a high proportion of aboriginal students who are not completing high school, as compared to, say, in Toronto, Montreal, or Halifax. As I recall, in Winnipeg 48% of aboriginal students do not complete high school. I have the data in my paper.

It's a complicated answer, because it depends upon region. In general, though, on-reserve students have a greater challenge than students not on-reserve. But I want to point out that some reserves are doing incredibly well. On some reserves, every single kid is completing high school and going on to post-secondary education. So there are a few reserves that are very focused.

You asked the more important question: What can we do to improve the results on reserve in the K to 12 system? That's the \$60,000 question. Just as an advertisement, I have a paper that will come out shortly, a policy paper addressing that very question. It will come out on the Caledon Institute website in the next two or three days. I was hoping it would come out before I came here. My short answer, which isn't dealt with in this paper, is that we need a school system for reserves in Canada. Right now, most of the reserves in Canada are operating on what I would call a village school model. They're isolated, and they don't have the support that would be provided by a large board of education—superintendents, principals, or development of curriculum, including culturally appropriate curriculum. This kind of support is incredibly important.

So we have to think about how first nations can develop their own school system, rather than a set of isolated village schools on reserves. There are exceptions, mainly because of the initiatives being undertaken by first nations. For example, in B.C. there's an interesting emerging model. It's not quite a school board, but almost. It's important to look at successes. There's a lot going on. But I'd say the reserve K to 12 system looks a lot like our rural education system did in 1946 or 1950, with a bunch of little schools funded by their individual towns and communities.

The Chair: You're out of time, Mr. Lemay.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Lemay: I just want to know.

[English]

The Chair: Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thanks, Mr. Mendelson, for your presentation.

This committee is looking at post-secondary schools, and is well aware of the challenges in the K to 12 system. They've been identified by the Auditor General. We're waiting somewhat

impatiently for their department to weigh out its management plan and framework.

Part of my concern with your presentation is that we've been hearing from witnesses across the country that there are some serious issues within the post-secondary system—supporting aboriginal students in getting into the system and then making sure they finish. If you were to make a recommendation to the government on where to put money, what would you be saying?

Mr. Michael Mendelson: You're asking me to make the kinds of choices that people get elected to make, and I'm not elected.

Ms. Jean Crowder: But your kind of research could be used. We've often heard the members opposite say that we need to focus on the K to 12 system. But we know there are significant issues in the post-secondary system. I would argue that we need to look at both systems, not just the K to 12.

• (1045)

Mr. Michael Mendelson: From my perspective, I would place aboriginal educational success above almost any other desirable outcome. It's the key to the success of the aboriginal community in Canada. So anything we can do to improve the educational outcomes would be a higher priority than almost anything I could think of in Canada.

Ms. Jean Crowder: And that would include the post-secondary system.

Mr. Michael Mendelson: Do both, I would say. That would be my answer.

I know that governments have to make choices, because I've been there. You have to make difficult choices between the things you want to do. You want to do two good things and you can't afford to do them both. In this case, to repeat what I said at the opening, my own argument is that if you have an aboriginal student who's gotten themselves into university, and a bursary or a scholarship could keep them there and help them succeed and get through that tough first year, which is harder now—I failed first year, by the way, not atypical—then let's do it. To me that's a higher priority than almost anything else I can think of—maybe even than anything else I can think of—particularly for the west.

As I said before, every single aboriginal student who gets themselves into a post-secondary education system and manages to qualify is such a precious resource, for their own community and for us, that how can we lose this? Let's find a way. I'm not sure, but if funding Roberta's foundation is a way to do it, then we could talk about that.

So I don't want to choose between particularly this or that, but I would say we need to think. Having said that, I don't want to lose the reality that you can do all you want on the post-secondary, but gee, if we have a 70% failure in high school....

Ms. Jean Crowder: I don't think anybody disagrees with that, but I think the real challenge—and I have another question, so I don't want you to answer this—is that if we turn out a whole bunch more students in K to 12 and don't do something with the post-secondary system, we're going to turn out students who can't get into the post-secondary system and be supported in it. So I think I would agree, we need to do both. We can't do just one.

Now, I want you to talk about data limitations. There have been in the past lots of concerns around census data. Anecdotally, there's a concern that aboriginal peoples are not necessarily represented adequately in census data because many people do not fill out the forms.

Can you talk quickly—I don't have much time left—about what are the key data limitations pieces?

Mr. Michael Mendelson: There are a lot of data limitations, which I go through in the paper. That's why I tell other researchers to prove me wrong, to use some of the micro-data to start looking at these kinds of issues in a lot more detail.

This is sort of like the high-level geological survey that says there may be gold here, or there may be diamonds there—now somebody get down on the ground and do some digging. That's sort of what I've done on this. I've just used that census data and there are a lot of limitations.

One limitation is that there are about 31,000 people on reserves, mainly in Quebec and Ontario, who didn't report at all in the census. They are not included here. This is footnoted in the paper. Another limitation concerns some very serious issues about the actual education variables, as reported by Statistics Canada itself, that...but I don't want to get into the technical details.

At any rate, one of the reasons that no one else has looked at the data in this way is that they hadn't been able to work themselves through the thicket of that data. It's the hierarchical variable, and it's not really the right variable, to be frank about it.

So there are data limitations, which I discuss extensively in here. I would say that you should treat this as a high-level geological survey—it's a nice analogy, I suppose, and I just thought of it—and look deeper.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Blaney.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to speak to you in French, Mr. Mendelson. I'd like to thank you for coming to meet with us.

As Ms. Karetak-Lindell said, sometimes we don't hear things we would like to hear, but your report and documents nevertheless contain information that we have to deal with.

I'm from Quebec. One statistic really strikes me. You say 60 percent of students don't complete their Secondary V. We know that, but it's not necessarily pleasant to see it on a table. I think that reflects certain challenges that the members of the First Nations have to face.

A number of committee members will be going to Lac Saint-Jean, to Mashteuiatsh, to attend the First Nations Socio-Economic Forum. They will have to determine the issues that are related to First Nations development.

I think you've been very clear. By that, I mean that, for you, education is a priority; it's a driver for getting students out of a vicious circle.

That leads me to ask you the following question. Can you give me more of an explanation on your basis for making such a clear, distinct connection between academic success in the community and better socio-economic conditions for the communities?

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Mendelson: Just quickly, under the slide on page 16, it is even worse, because it's only the population aged 20 to 24, it's not the general population. If you look at the general population, the results are even more discouraging than you would think at first glance. I just want to point that out. It's not great.

I hope there will be a lot of focus on the education issue in your discussion in Quebec.

The question you asked, just remind me.... I'm sorry, what was the—

Mr. Steven Blaney: You make a clear link between low socio-economic status and studies. You say that studies show that better education is...you know, the kind of thing we heard from our parents. But I guess you assume—

Mr. Michael Mendelson: It's the cycle: low socio-economic status is the best predictor of failure to complete school and get a post-secondary education, which is itself the best indicator of low socio-economic status—and it goes on and on. How you break the cycle of low socio-economic status and low educational attainment are very difficult questions.

The studies have shown, however, that there are very significant financial and economic returns to aboriginal students who do complete post-secondary education. There have been some pretty good studies. One I think has been done by Statistics Canada, and I've referenced a few other independent researchers. One study showed that on average, a woman who completes university will have an additional income of \$1 million in her lifetime. This was several years ago, so it's probably \$2 million by now. The data shows that there are very significant returns.

I think part of our challenge will be, one, to show that kind of information to young aboriginal people; and secondly, to convince them that they do have a chance. If they can finish school, they do have a chance and there will be significant results.

How that then translates back to the community I think is a challenge for first nations. Many, many of the people who have been successful among first nations have gone back to their communities. They are trying to contribute, and Roberta is obviously one of them. That is happening.

There are some pretty successful reserves, by the way. Membertou, just as an example, on Cape Breton, has been very successful. They've essentially been putting every single student through high school, and they're trying to get every single student to succeed in post-secondary education. There are some very successful reserves on the west coast as well.

The Chair: Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I would like to follow up on that last point.

Thank you, by the way, for your excellent presentation.

How can we take that data from a reserve where they have a very high success rate and replicate it across the country? Secondly, in your larger report, your first conclusion refers to how we would establish targets at various levels. You mentioned the different groups that would need to establish those. Could you just give an extra two- or three-minute description of how you see that working as well?

Thank you.

•(1055)

Mr. Michael Mendelson: Those are really two different questions.

One of the hardest questions in social policy is how you replicate success. It's a question I've thought about often, because the reality often is that a successful social initiative is a result of leadership, somebody being a great inspirational leader and taking risks on the ground and really being capable. You can't necessarily easily replicate that.

If you look at some of the reserves that have been most successful, you'll find often that there is somebody who has been a terrific leader. So that's sort of the difficult part.

But I think what we need to do is invest—and I would say that this would be a challenge for INAC—in a real best practices process that's more than sort of a bow to occasionally writing up a few paragraphs on a website, the kinds of best practices that....

Take a big board of education like the Winnipeg school board or Vancouver or Toronto. They'll spend a lot of time looking at schools that are successful, encouraging the principals who are successful, finding out what's going on, taking those lessons and having meetings among the principals and others to try to translate the success from one place to....

It's going on in a few sort of isolated regions, just because of individual initiatives in the regions. But there's no systematic school system that encourages that automatic, ongoing, continuous improvement for on-reserve aboriginal education. And I think that's a problem in INAC.

The second question of setting targets I discuss, and it's a different question. I'm a believer in setting quantitative targets and measuring the outcomes, if you can. The real problem, and the first problem in this area, is measuring the outcome, because we really don't have any ongoing measurement. That's one of the reasons I used the census, which is done every five years, and it's not very good in many ways.

There is the development now of some better data sources, based on what we call administrative data, but they need to be developed and researched. So the first thing about setting targets is that there is no use setting a target unless you can measure the results.

Then I would say that there should be a consensual approach among first nations and governments—both provincial and federal—and educators in the region to set targets and to try to set realistic targets that are difficult, challenging, ambitious, and achievable.

We could go through more specifics. I would say that doing it region by region would be better than doing it sort of holus-bolus for all of Canada.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm just going to comment. That was a question that I had, as far as tracking success—is it just due to funding, or are there other factors? You've touched on that. It has a lot to do with leadership and I think with self-empowerment within the aboriginal community and with what their priorities are and what their leadership is all about. I think that's a good observation.

But I also know that there need to be the resources there when they manage to bring that together to make sure that they can carry through with those aspirations as far as direction and leadership.

Thank you very much for speaking to us today. We really appreciate that.

Yes, Madam Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: This is not to do with the presentation, but I can't remember if we had a date when the parliamentary secretary was going to bring back that information on the residential schools. It was at that meeting that had been in camera but was supposed to be public.

The Chair: Right, okay. We could do that at the next meeting.

You did report to us, but it was at the tail end of our meeting and it was kind of rushed.

Do you want something more thorough and do you want it written, also?

Ms. Jean Crowder: I had thought that the parliamentary secretary had said that he was going to bring it back, because we actually didn't get to hear it all.

The Chair: There have been a few news releases as far as cheques going out and that type of thing.

Could I ask the parliamentary secretary to provide a one-page statement? Then we can discuss that.

Thank you again.

We are now adjourned.

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