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

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**Thursday, October 5, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**

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

Thursday, October 5, 2006

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** I would like to call this meeting to order, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), for a study on employability in Canada.

I would like to take this time before we get started to thank all the witnesses here today. This study we're doing on employability—I'm sure you're aware of it, and I'm sure it's near and dear to your hearts, as it is to ours—is something our committee unanimously decided to start at the beginning of the year, and we're working through it. We appreciate your taking your time to be here today to share with us some of the concerns you have in your specific sectors.

I'm going to ask each presenter to take only seven minutes. Then we'll have some rounds of questions. Our first round will be seven minutes, with questions and answers, and our second round will be five minutes. At that point, the members can ask questions to clarify anything.

Ms. Steeves, for seven minutes. And thank you once again for being here.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves (Executive Director, Canadian Automotive Repair and Service):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, honourable members.

Good morning. My name is Jennifer Steeves and I am the executive director of the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council, CARS for short. Thank you for inviting us to present today.

CARS is a national sector council and addresses the needs of one of the largest and most important components of the Canadian labour market.

The Canadian automotive power repair and service sector is a large and growing sector, comprised of approximately 39,000 businesses, employing about 254,000 workers. It keeps some 17 million Canadian vehicles on the road. More than half of the enterprises are small shops employing one to four staff.

Employers across Canada from our industry have indicated that a lack of qualified staff adversely affects the profitability of their organization. Almost half of our employers say their businesses suffer from a lack of qualified staff. Over the next decade the industry is estimating a supply demand between 24,000 and 39,000 workers. These expected supply shortfalls will put even more pressure on industry employers to retain existing workers and develop more expertise from within.

First let me say that CARS applauds the Government of Canada on its commitment to employability issues by announcing financial supports geared towards increased employability of all skilled trades people in Canada. These measures and incentives will benefit the small, independent service shops that make up the bulk of our industry.

To further the government agenda, national sector councils are well positioned to be part of the solution to employability issues faced by Canadians. CARS was among the very first sector councils established in 1988. The councils bring together the stakeholders affected by human resource issues, including employers, industry organizations, employees, and organizations providing training and professional development.

Between short- and long-term initiatives related to human resource development training, sector councils gather labour market information, develop occupational standards, develop curriculum, and monitor the standards of program delivery. It is our belief, based on experience, that the employability of our sector's workers depends on the ability to conduct ongoing skills assessment, undertake ongoing skills upgrading, and access training that meets current needs.

CARS has a proud history of working well with all levels of government, educational institutions, private trainers, and motive power industry leaders. These partnerships are increasing public awareness of employment opportunities and skills required in our workforce, enhancing standards of excellence in post-secondary program delivery, and making skills upgrading and professional development as universally accessible as possible by employing interactive distance learning, IDL, which is our satellite-based training delivery system.

The CARS IDL system is an excellent example of how initial government investment has continued and grown to serve the training needs of the industry. CARS interactive distance learning offers more than 320 technical and non-technical courses via satellite broadcast to industry workers and employers at 700 shops across the country. This professional development training is broadcast five days per week and is now being expanded into the collision repair industry.

Our sector has to be proactive to ensure that its training remains current, given both the current rate of technological change and the expected acceleration and complexity posed by such things as alternate fuel technologies, new hybrid cars, and electronics. In fact, electronics now control more than 86% of all systems in the typical vehicle. Advanced electronics computerized telematic systems sustain safety, environmental, communications, and entertainment systems on the modern vehicle. New field technology, such as hybrids, fuel cell, ethanol 85 and advanced diesel, for example, will have a significant impact on the motive power repair and service industry.

Given the current trends in technological advancement, it is easy to understand that our industry employees need to access quality and relevant training to further develop their skills so they can continue to meet the needs of the Canadian motoring public.

New employees entering the industry need to have sound foundational skills that they continue to build on throughout their careers. To that end, post-secondary training and apprenticeship need to provide students with quality relevant training. Once in the workforce, employees need access to ongoing, flexible, relevant training options, while looking to employers to provide both the time and financial support to make skills upgrading possible.

In 2005 CARS began an essential skills project to build essential skill profiles for key occupations. We also developed an assessment tool and benchmarked essential skill levels for workers, apprentices, and students in these occupations. Each participant was assessed for current skill levels in reading, numeracy, and document use. The overall results and the profiles developed showed that one industry worker out of three needs to improve his or her essential skills to function well in their industry occupation.

The knowledge gathered by CARS through this project will be used to educate industry and educators on existing skill-level requirements, create all nine professional development tools, infuse more essential skill elements into our own interactive distance learning, and deliver trainer sessions that demonstrate the impact of essential skills on learning.

Considering the future labour pool, CARS is currently conducting new research to examine the integration challenges faced by internationally trained workers. The objective of this research is to identify information gaps on the employment of internationally trained workers, existing skills assessment and recognition initiatives, and initiatives CARS could implement if required to address any service gaps.

Based on this background I've given you, CARS would now like to contribute to the national consultation on employability issues by making the following three recommendations:

(1) Re-introduce a partnership between government and industry to leverage training dollars. We suggest this because it is our experience that the best premise for building a dynamic, skilled Canadian workforce is the development of an active training culture. Such a training culture can only exist if all stakeholders have a vested interest in its success.

(2) Expand distance learning. CARS research study established an interest and readiness on the part of employers and employees in

embracing e-learning as a training option, based on the additional flexibility it offers.

(3) Build a range of online professional development tools such as skills assessment that industry employees can use throughout their careers.

In conclusion, I'd like to sum up the all-around benefits of such initiatives: employers gain a more productive labour force at reduced training cost; employees gain greater employability and earning power by being able to service a product in less time than prescribed at the flat rate; consumers have well-functioning, safe automobiles; government gains a more productive and competitive sector with reduced EI costs.

Thank you very much.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Steeves.

We're going to move to the Electricity Sector Council. Ms. Cottingham.

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham (Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Electricity Sector Council):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman, honourable members, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I would like to take the opportunity to share with you the perspective of a new sector council. We are just ten months old.

The electricity and renewable energy industry is part of Canada's critical infrastructure. It supports all industries and the well-being of every Canadian. As is said in the industry, we are all connected in the grid.

However, the industry is facing significant challenges because of an aging workforce. Within the next eight years, 40% of Canada's electricity workforce is anticipated to retire. Based on historical retirement patterns, we expect 30% to leave the industry. This reflects the many boomers who are in the industry, as they are in most of our Canadian industries.

We are going to face extensive competition from our colleagues, in all aspects of the labour force, for new employees. Due to the cost restraints of the nineties, Canada has not hired significantly, and it has not sustained sufficient junior replacement positions for the number of retiring electricity and renewable energy workers.

Equally significant is that advances in technology are changing the skills profile of employees and the workforce is growing with infrastructure replacement and expansion. By 2020, we anticipate the equivalent of a third of Canada's current installed capacity in the electricity business will need to be replaced or built new. At the same time that we are losing a significant number of knowledge workers from our industry, we are facing a huge amount of infrastructure refurbishment, replacement, and new build.

The industry is found in all regions and jurisdictions of Canada, in large and small communities, and in rural and urban environments. Workers for the industry are highly skilled and well supported by industry training programs. The electricity industry in Canada invests six times the national average in every worker. The majority of positions require post-secondary education and professional, trade, technical, or engineering certification.

Across Canada, the industry has a varied corporate structure. In some provinces, there is a holding by the province; in others there is a mix of governmental ownership, both provincial and municipal; and in some provinces, it is fully privatized. The majority of the industry is subject to rate regulation and consequently a highly controlled revenue stream. Canada has some of the lowest electricity rates in the world.

Regulatory authorities can define the areas where firms undertake operations and the nature of their investment in human infrastructure. Regulators that have the best of intentions to control consumer power costs often constrain the efforts of the industry to address the pending workforce retirements. They treat workforce development as a cost centre, as opposed to an infrastructure.

Other countries are facing similar aging workforce profiles. We are going to be extremely challenged as an industry and a business to develop new talent for our industry.

Consequently, our industry members, Electro-Federation, the Electricity Association, the Nuclear Association, and various renewable energy organizations, together with our four largest unions, CUPE, IBEW, the Power Workers, and the Society of Energy Professionals, gathered together in 2005 to respond to the results of a 2004 study supported by the Government of Canada, which provided the data I gave you, to create an electricity sector council.

Our industry used the sector council program as a significant initiative to support workforce development. We are extremely pleased to be supported in this way by the Government of Canada. We bring focus to workforce initiatives as sector councils, and we represent, in a non-partisan fashion, all key stakeholders. Our boards include educators, labour organizations, industry members, as well as regulatory authorities for occupational standards and related stakeholders.

With me today is board member Norm Fraser. Norm will share the industry perspective with you.

• (1115)

**Mr. Norm Fraser (Vice-President, Operations, Electricity Sector Council):** Thank you, Catherine.

Good morning, everybody. My name is Mr. Norm Fraser. I'm the vice-president of operations at Hydro Ottawa. This is the local distribution company that supplies the city of Ottawa. In simpler terms, I'm the guy you call when the lights go out.

I'm here to talk about what electricity means to us in the industry and to the public.

If you think about your electricity bill, it arrives once every two months or so, or every month. You pay it and you don't think about it too much. You flick the switch on your wall and things happen.

You're not asking for more electricity, you're asking for the services that electricity provides: your washing machine, lighting, electronics, telephones, furnace, air conditioning, security systems—practically everything we can see.

The job of my business, the electricity business, is straightforward: generate and deliver the product reliably and cost-effectively. In Canada, we are world leaders. All Canadians enjoy the comforts and economic benefits associated with one of the most reliable and cost-effective electricity networks in the world. The measure of my success in our industry is when people don't think about it. They take it for granted; it's always there and it's a reasonable cost.

Now try to imagine a world in which the electricity production and delivery system isn't as reliable, or is maybe unavailable for long periods of time. Remember August 2003, and then think about the debate in Ontario in the last few years over the security of the electricity supply.

Simply, without electricity our society, as we have built it over the last four generations, would come to a halt. All our industries rely heavily on safe, secure, and affordable electricity: telecommunications, manufacturing, agriculture, banking, petrochemicals, transportation, etc. This is why we have this council.

There are thousands of highly skilled Canadians running your electricity business. They are engineers, line maintainers, transmission operators, electricians, etc. They work in generating stations, transmission companies, and distribution utilities.

They will be retiring en masse in very short order, and we have to move quickly to sustain this talent pool.

In closing, I would ask you to remember that almost all sectors in Canada are facing a similar demographic challenge, but unless we deal with electricity as a fundamental underpinning of our economy, we might as well not bother to address the others. They will not thrive in a global economy with a floundering electricity network, regardless of how robust their workforce is or how competitive they try to be.

This is why I eagerly agreed to sit on this board. I've worked in this business my whole adult life; my demographic may be part of the problem, but I'm going to work hard to make sure that I'm part of the solution.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fraser. I appreciate that.

We're going to move along, for seven minutes, to the Biotechnology Human Resource Council. I believe it's Madame Rivet.

**Ms. Colette Rivet (Executive Director, Biotechnology Human Resource Council):** Good morning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, and ladies and gentlemen, for the opportunity to share in your examination of employability issues in Canada.

[*Translation*]

My name is Colette Rivet and I am Executive Director of the Biotechnology Human Resource Council.

[*English*]

Biotechnology is comprised of such core technologies as RNA/DNA applications, cell and tissue culture and engineering, nano-biotechnology and subcellular processes. It involves such sub-sectors as human health, agriculture, food processing, natural resources, environment, aquaculture, bioinformatics, and of course bio-energy.

Biotechnology also encompasses such areas as life sciences, pharmaceuticals and medical devices, all sharing specific biotechnology competencies within a unique global environment.

The full achievement of the potential benefits of biotechnology depends on the industry's ability to manage its human resource challenges. A more strategic and national approach to the human resource challenges facing the industry is critical to ensure the long-term growth and sustainability of the sector.

In addition to driving demands in human health and the other sub-sectors, current trends driving demand for bio-products include concerns for the environment, greenhouse gas reduction, and the cost and availability of petroleum. New products promise to deliver added value at the farm gate, while at the same time providing products that lessen the impact on our environment.

Agriculture and forestry will form the basis for the creation of a new industry based on renewable carbon and a new and prosperous Canada.

However, rapid commercial and technological progress is stressing the industry's human resources capacity. Overall, Canadian-based biotechnology companies have global niche opportunities, but at the same time these firms face unique business challenges because they are highly regulated, research and development intensive, and many have long product development times with high-risk product failure.

Most are small enterprises and many of these have uncertain futures because of limited access to financing. So as a result of this limited long-term financing and minimal staff per company there has been little focus and funds available for human resources and the skill issues. Competition is also intense due to the highly specialized international nature of this industry.

The biotechnology industry has a wide range of skill requirements, including entry level and senior researchers, as well as experts in areas such as intellectual property, quality assurance,

informatics, and marketing. The development of emerging technologies requires new skills, often immediately.

As companies move through their life cycle they require new technical management and leadership skills that are not needed at earlier stages. Similarly, as products move to commercialization, skills are needed in companies and public sector bodies in areas such as regulatory affairs and legal affairs.

The many players and stakeholders in Canada in the Canadian biotechnology industry vary in size, location, the sub-sector in which they operate, and the stage of development, while sharing the specific competencies that are required.

The shortage of qualified people is impacting the growth of Canadian biotechnology. The sector is now beginning to realize how acute this is, and people like venture capitalists and junior scientists and administrative managers are realizing that they need to understand how the biotechnology industry is different from the industries they are used to dealing with.

Biotechnology Human Resource Council's objective is to ensure that qualified, skilled, and experienced people are available to fill the jobs in the industry and can contribute to the development of a more competitive sector. As a non-profit and national organization it works with industry, researchers, educators, governments, and employees to meet this goal. BHRC has a critical leadership and coordination role in working with industry stakeholders.

Our first recommendation is that we believe the Government of Canada's role should be to support a stepped-up partnership approach between the government and sector councils to address and implement labour market solutions.

As a sector council, BHRC has a strong advantage in successfully leading a national human resource strategy for the biotechnology industry, since BHRC's membership is of the industry, and industry buy-in will be critical to achieving strategy. BHRC has a national mandate and is pursuing a less fragmented approach than is currently the situation, partnering with provincial and territorial governments and regional organizations to complement and build upon initiatives and reduce duplication of efforts. Also, there are many private, public, and non-profit organizations across the country that are involved in education, credentialing, and/or training within the biotechnology sector, and BHRC remains objective and inclusive to all potential partners, while leading the recognition process of those that enable the job readiness of workers. And BHRC is pursuing a strategic and systemic approach that will build sustainability for the work accomplished within the biotechnology sector.

•(1120)

The second recommendation is related to competencies and training. The rate of scientific advancement globally and both the emergence of new technologies and convergence of existing technologies translates to the need for human resources with interdisciplinary training and an ability to remain flexible in a rapidly evolving environment. This interdisciplinary training is the major gap in scientific and technical programming today. In addition to the need for programs that converge scientific disciplines and provide more hands-on training to increase their relevance to industry needs, areas such as intellectual property, regulatory affairs, and commercialization need to be integrated to help students to understand the industry beyond the research and discovery stages.

Companies will stress the importance of continuous learning and future concerns regarding the ability of staff to adapt to changing business environments. A number will suggest that if individuals can demonstrate specific competencies, they can be brought on board and trained in required technologies and skills.

So the second recommendation we provided you is to facilitate the setting of national skill and occupational standards, which will assist with integration and help coordinate the needs of employers, as well as the development of a national qualification framework, including Canadian credentialing and certification systems, which will assist with foreign credential recognition.

Thank you very much for your time.

•(1125)

**The Chair:** Thank you for being here to present.

We're going to move over to the National Seafood Sector Council now, to Johanna Oehling, who is the president. As well, you brought along Mr. Phil LeBlanc.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling (President, National Seafood Sector Council):** He is a board member.

**The Chair:** Great. So if you would like seven minutes....

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** That's seven minutes for the two of us.

**The Chair:** That's right.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** Thank you.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for that introduction.

The National Seafood Sector Council provides viable solutions to human resource and labour challenges in the seafood processing industry. Numerous industry enterprises, associations, institutes, and related organizations hold membership within our council. The NSSC is a national service provider for training and learning products geared towards the seafood processing industry, and as a national leader, we approach the consultations on employability in Canada with great enthusiasm.

[*Translation*]

The National Seafood Sector Council, or NSSC, is a non-profit organization which takes its lead from industry. The NSSC was Established in 1995, the NSSC is committed to developing human resources strategies and programs targeting the entire seafood processing industry. It is a unique partnership comprised of

employers, employees, unions, associations, regulatory organizations and private sector trainers, who are working together towards a common goal: a dynamic and prosperous seafood processing industry built by a well-trained and productive workforce.

[*English*]

The Canadian seafood processing sector is a vibrant industry and has a worldwide reputation for high-quality fish products. Approximately 35,000 workers make up this workforce, with 100 registered processing operations across the country, according to DFO.

The seafood industry accounts for 20% of total food products, with over 85% of its products and seafood production sold to over 130 countries worldwide. As the world's fifth-largest exporter of fish and seafood products, the industry contributes \$4.3 billion to the Canadian economy. Lobster and crab are the country's most valuable exports. In terms of volume, it is herring and shrimp.

The seafood industry accounts for 15% of the total manufacturing workforce in Canada.

I give you all this background to show how viable our industry still is in Canada today. For the past 11 years, we have been at the forefront of Canadian seafood processors in addressing their human resource needs. The experience of our council, coupled with industry expertise, has given us great opportunity to meet the industry demands of the sector, in both a timely and effective manner.

We first developed a quality management program when the Canadian Food Inspection Agency revised its regulations. We were first off the mark, and the country was trained on that basis. We do a lot of work in food safety, which of course is a big issue in today's world. In particular, we have many tools in sanitation and hygiene.

After 9/11, bioterrorism became a critical issue with many sectors and companies that export to the U.S. It was especially important that we were able to respond and developed some training tools to enable the industry to move forward and get their products across the border.

We are also well connected. We have a regional presence in seven provinces across the country. Having someone on the ground at the forefront with industry allows us to create numerous linkages and partnerships on a yearly basis with education, NGOs, various levels of government, associations, and community groups. We have a plethora of products and services in both official languages. We have over 40 tools and services, and I do have a few samples here.

The seafood processing industry, like many others, is facing labour shortages. There are workers who are aging and preparing to exit the workforce. Not enough workers are pursuing careers in this sector at a sufficient rate to replace the aging workers, and employers in the seafood processing industry are struggling to find skilled workers.

Two areas have impacted the industry's competitiveness, and they are skilled worker shortages and the need for a national worker mobility program.

• (1130)

**Mr. Phil LeBlanc (President, IMO Foods Canada Limited, National Seafood Sector Council):** I'll talk a bit on the skilled worker shortages. My name is Phil LeBlanc. I am the president of IMO Foods, which is a private label seafood processing company located in Nova Scotia.

As we heard, everybody has labour shortages coming up or expected, and the seafood industry is in the same position as everyone else.

In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, Canadian seafood processors have to find niche markets if we're going to be successful in our business. At the same time, we need to retain the skilled workers other people are looking for and keep them in our industry by providing them a stable and steady place of employment.

There is a need now for a rebalancing of interests brought about by these market-driven changes affecting our industry. The approach we're recommending is that processors develop a model through a national forum on fisheries to conduct and engage seafood processors, the fish harvesters, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in a dialogue that addresses the management of the fishery.

Ideally these groups would collaborate and share information and resources to reach a consensus concerning the management of the fishery, in terms of opening and closing dates and other things that affect everybody in a common way. The overall prosperity of the seafood processing industry can be expected to improve if we do this.

The recommendation on skilled workers is that the government provide assistance in the development of a national model to facilitate a dialogue of DFO, fish harvesters, and the processing sector to help in the management of the fishery in a collaborative way.

We'll get back to worker mobility for another minute.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** Thank you, Phil.

There has been much discussion and debate recently on the topic of bringing in foreign workers to meet the shortages of the Canadian labour market; yet more efforts should be made to maximize and effectively utilize the Canadian labour pool.

Our approach is to seek a way to increase labour mobility within Canada with relative ease for our workers. Any framework of labour mobility, of course, should include minimum standards governing recognition of skills, training, and knowledge. There are currently federal and provincial labour mobility programs available to assist employers and employees, but they exist largely for the regulated occupations, professions, and trades.

What the NSSC is seeking would be a non-regulated, sectoral approach to assist inter- and intra-provincial mobility. The essence of the program would provide some financial assistance to relocate, and a framework or measure of social support to assist workers in their new locale.

While there are seasonal foreign worker programs that could also assist in addressing these labour shortages, there is a desire on the

part of the Canadian industry, and that includes labour unions, to offer employment opportunities to Canadians first and foremost. With the appropriate mechanism, our council believes, this can be achieved.

Optimally, the development of a program to assist workers to move to other areas would enable all these support mechanisms.

Immobility in the seafood industry is particularly important, as the seasons for employment can be short. Broader food-processing seasons can be linked together to extend the period of seasonal employment. This would allow fish workers to engage in employment opportunities in other areas.

A number of the skills are transferable, especially in the areas of quality control sets. There must be at least some incentive, however, to assist the workers to move to other locations. The Province of New Brunswick is working with fish processing employees to provide a measure of support to facilitate employment in other seasonal industries that complement the crab season, for example particularly in blueberry and potato processing.

Given the limits of time, I'll cut back on further descriptions, but I would like to get through the recommendations, if I may.

The first one is that government should provide integration assistance for workers moving from one location to another within Canada. It's similar in concept to the provincial program at the local level.

Incentives should be made available to promote worker mobility.

The third one is to provide assistance and programs for non-regulated professions, in addition to the current emphasis on the regulated professions or occupations.

Our final recommendation is to create a dialogue between the various levels of government—including provinces—and employers to facilitate mobility.

Thank you very much.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Oehling. We appreciate this.

We're going to move to our last presenter for today, and that's the Cultural Human Resources Council and Ms. Annis, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Susan Annis (Executive Director, Cultural Human Resources Council):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to speak to you today on behalf of the artists and cultural workers in Canada, as executive director of the Cultural Human Resources Council—that's CHRC.

I'll just point out that Jennifer actually has a very good acronym with "CARS". We affectionately call ours "CHURCH" from time to time, but I'm not just sure how appropriate that one is.



In the cultural sector, our issue is not so much labour shortages, as several of my colleagues have pointed out; it's more an issue of providing training to cultural workers in a world that is fast-changing. We are very affected by globalization and by new technologies, and that's really where our challenge is. It's not in recruiting members to our sector; it's more in getting the stars out of their eyes, as we like to say. Young people do come to the cultural sector, but the challenges once they're there are quite significant, and they have to be committed.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin by providing you with an overview of the sector so that you are able to get a sense of its size. It includes more than half a million cultural workers, in other words, artists, creators, actors, producers, distributors and archivers.

It also includes several subsectors. For example, stage performers, which includes musicians, dancers, actors, visual artists and crafts persons.

The sector also includes the cultural industries. These have a major impact on the economy as they are worth \$33 billion. In our jargon, the cultural industries include publishing, sound recording, audio-visual—film and television—and new media.

Heritage is another large subsector which includes libraries, archives, heritage buildings and museums.

Our sector is characterized by a large number of self-employed workers who, for the most part, have an income which is modest and constantly fluctuating; they go through rough times and good.

That is a brief overview of the sector.

[*English*]

The Cultural Human Resources Council has acted as a sector council for over ten years now for this sector. We've been involved in developing career management tools, internship support, labour market research, strategic planning, etc.

To give you a sense of some of the issues that we address with the cultural workers, with the sector, we develop competency charts and profiles. These are done to provide a sense of what the skills needs are in an occupation. They can be used for curriculum developers to develop curriculum in schools, colleges, or universities; they can be used by self-employed workers to assess their own skills; they can be used by employers to write job descriptions, etc.

These charts and profiles have had a very big impact on the sector. An example is in the area of new media three years ago. There's an absolutely booming business now. The creators—we called them basement dwellers—didn't really talk to each other, but they were in front of their computer screens doing wonderful things. By bringing forward the process of developing a competency chart and profile for new media content creators, we brought that community together and gave them a voice and a profile. This multi-billion-dollar industry—which is led by the gaming industry, of course—is being well served by these people, so we were able to make a connection between the artists and the industry in that case.

The self-employment issue is the big feature of the sector that we are having to deal with. As many as 39% of the cultural labour force

describe themselves as self-employed; however, a significant number of these pursue secondary employment to earn a living wage. For example, a writer or visual artist may be self-employed for the purposes of creating and selling their work, while at the same time that person may function as an employee teaching at a college, university, or school.

The separation of each distinctive source of income has proven to be challenging when dealing with issues like the ownership of intellectual property, copyright, taxation, and access to social benefits. It is this blend of employment and self-employment combined with low and fluctuating incomes that sets the cultural sector apart from the rest of the Canadian workforce, and that has provided the basis for the three main recommendations that we make to you today. As I make them, I invite you to consider the fact that these will affect Canadians outside the cultural workforce as well. It's been pointed out to me that there is an opposition day in Parliament, I believe, addressing issues around older workers; as I read through these, I'd like you to think about how this would affect the broader workforce as well.

Our first recommendation has to do with social benefits. We're asking the government to consider extending social benefits, including employment insurance, to the self-employed.

One of the most difficult employability issues faced by artists and cultural workers who are self-employed is that in addition to having low and fluctuating incomes, they don't have a social safety net to support them. This includes the access to compassionate leave, parental leave, and sick leave that is enjoyed by most Canadians, as well as access to training programs and, of course, employment insurance.

The second recommendation we would ask you consider is the importance of training and professional development in the sector. We ask that the government continue to support initiatives that, while recognizing provincial jurisdiction for training, take a national approach to training in our sector. That national approach is what sector councils provide, and we feel we fulfill a very important role there.

Third, we ask that you support mentorship programs that are not age-restricted to facilitate career development in succession. It is in this area that we're starting to address the older part of the workforce. The federal government has been very supportive with youth internships, as well as addressing the issue of school dropout, etc., and that bridge between school and work. We're seeing that there is also a very big issue that's being addressed by older workers; if we could extend those youth internship programs to include other ages, you would be able to address succession issues and career transfer issues, transition issues, for older workers as well.

Those are our three major recommendations. I thank you for your time and attention.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** And thank you, Ms. Annis.

I also wanted to mention to the two board members who are here that we appreciate your taking the time to come all the way here. Mr. Fraser, I know you have to deke out soon for some other previous business, but I want to thank you as board members, as volunteers, who were able to be here and spend some time. Thank you very much.

We're going to start with the first round of questioning. It will be seven minutes for questions and answers. We have Mr. Regan here.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly seven minutes is not enough, as we all understand, nor is the time we have today, because there are many questions.

By the way, I had the pleasure of visiting Mr. LeBlanc's plant, IMO Foods in Yarmouth, and it's nice to welcome all of you here, but it's particularly nice to see you here.

One of the things that strikes me as I listen to this evidence is that we Canadians haven't really appreciated the impact the demographic change we're seeing is going to have on our economy and our society. I'd like you to talk for a moment about your own industry and what you think it will mean in the next five years. For example, will it mean that as you have to pay more and more for your employees and have more trouble getting them, it will price you out of some markets? Will it mean people are going to be working in other fields, and there will be less activity in certain industries?

It seems to me we haven't recognized what a dramatic shift we're facing, because for the first time in our lifetime, instead of having a situation where there aren't enough jobs, we'll have a situation where more and more there aren't enough employees. I would like your comments on that very broad question.

• (1145)

**The Chair:** Mr. Fraser, you're leaving?

**Mr. Norm Fraser:** Yes. Thank you. Sorry.

Before I go for my budget meeting—and by the way, this is more important than a budget meeting—I have to answer that question, because it's fundamental to us.

Not only are we experiencing the aging workforce, but in our business we are also experiencing aging infrastructure, so we have these escalating demands on our workforce. The equipment is getting older, and we have fewer people to work on it. A seller's market for labour is developing very rapidly. We are seeing that now in the skilled trades and even in the professions, that people are going to the highest bidder. We have graduate engineers with three-years' experience who are leaving for other companies and getting paid more than someone in our company with 15 years' experience. The seller's market is developing and it's very troublesome for us. This is why we need to recruit at the entry level for jobs, for professions, and trade.

**The Chair:** Ms. Cottingham.

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I would like to present that in a pan-Canadian context, because one of my roles as an executive director in the sector council program is to deal with all my different constituencies.

To Norm's point, what's happening for us in the Canadian environment is that those jurisdictions that might not be described in our HR parlance as a recruiting destination—a place where whether you're from there or not, you'd want to go there—are really struggling to compete in this competitive labour market. Those businesses that are crowns and governmentally regulated and have to deal with what that means for compensation are struggling to compete against those businesses that are privatized.

We're getting a cross-Canadian challenge to deliver on our electricity business, and of course that's disturbing. We don't want to eat each other up from the inside. We want to partner, and that's the value the sector council program is bringing us. It's taking that right off the table and saying together we are stronger, and we're very pleased to be able to partner with that.

**The Chair:** Madame Rivet.

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** In biotechnology it's not only the shortage of people we're going to experience, but also it's mainly skills development, because it takes a lot of years to get the skills required to work in the biotechnology sector. Therefore, we need to find a way of getting the skills into our sector. One we're working on is the immigration issue, because a lot of skilled people are coming to our country, and we're working very actively. Currently I'm doing an environmental scan and working with them to see how we can bring them in and identify competencies instead of credentials, so we can bring them into our sector closer and faster.

**The Chair:** Mr. LeBlanc.

**Mr. Phil LeBlanc:** Within the seafood sectors we're going to have to do more with fewer people, and that involves training. This sector is so important to provide training and allow us to improve our knowledge so we can do more with fewer people. The use of technology is the way we have to go.

**The Chair:** Ms. Oehling.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** Of course we have an issue of an aging workforce, but we also have to deal with competition from other sectors, both from urban areas where our seafood processing sector exists, such as in Vancouver, for example, and also from more prosperous economies. If we don't address this issue adequately, the potential exists for the diminishing of our sector. That is very important.

Typically the seafood processing industry, as a place of employment, also hasn't had the highest reputation. Yet there are some wonderful jobs within seafood processing establishments. I'm not sure how well that is known. We are working to address all of that. At the end of the day, we have all the competitive issues that other groups have, plus we have a few others, as I just mentioned.

**The Chair:** Mr. Regan.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** That reminds me of when I visited IMO Foods. When I was the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and went to the Boston seafood show, I saw some of the most modern equipment. It takes highly trained people to maintain and operate that equipment these days, which changes things.

This brings me to the question of what emphasis should the Government of Canada be putting on the issue of providing training for higher skills and what emphasis should it be putting on basic education? In other words, we have a lot of people on the margins. Among certain groups in our country, we have large numbers of people who have difficulty with basic education, literacy, numeracy, and so forth. What emphasis should the Government of Canada be putting on that group of people, versus those who are ready for higher skills training? It seems to me that we have fewer and fewer of those. If they are ready, they are doing it and they're probably employed, especially in Alberta.

Speaking of the Yarmouth area, my colleague Robert Thibault spoke to me recently about how AF Theriault & Son, which is a major shipbuilder in that area, lost twenty welders to Alberta and now has to train carpenters to be welders.

• (1150)

**Mr. Phil LeBlanc:** That's right.

I'll talk about the marginal people you speak about. In our industry, there are a lot of entry-level people coming in who need some essential skills development. We need to focus on lifelong learning in our industry, as in other industries, and build on essential skills while they're in the workplace.

At some times of the year, because of the seasonal nature of our business, there are opportunities for people to take training and build their central skills, and maybe even develop some post-secondary types of training. We have to work that way and make this a very important part of the development of our workforce.

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

That's all the time we have for that round.

We're going to move to the next questioner, Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** I would like to thank you for coming today. You have all raised the issue of skills development, and I have a number of questions to ask in this regard. I don't know where to start.

In my riding, there are a number of residents who were formally physicians in other countries, but who now scrub floors. Is your company willing to take on well-trained immigrants, and invite them to sit for tests so that they are able to practice in the province and in the country? Is your company prepared to help them throughout this process?

Many people who come here from abroad have to start their studies from scratch. This is a very expensive process. And given that they have already completed a program of study, they don't feel like starting from square one.

Ms. Rivet, you work in the biotechnology field. Would you be willing to take on people with some skills and back them financially as a measure of your support throughout the whole process?

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** Thank you for asking me this question. I am very anxious to answer it. We are indeed looking for ways to assist such people and assess their skills. I did not have the opportunity to

talk to you about this, but it is an issue which was referred to in our written brief.

Over the next three weeks, I will be travelling throughout the country speaking to skilled immigrants who have doctorates and other such qualifications, in order to determine what obstacles prevent them from being part of the biotechnology labour market.

I am also going to speak to employers and ask them the same questions. Often times, employers are afraid immigrants do not have the right skills for their company. These are very small-scale companies which do not even have enough money in the bank to pay out a year's wages. These companies do not usually want to risk employing people who do not match the right skill set.

I am not talking about large pharmaceutical companies, I am talking about small companies which make up 75% of our sector. When looking for solutions such as one-year internships, which will give these immigrants experience and reassure employers that there is no risk involved at all. This would also give immigrants an opportunity to determine whether they like that particular industry.

So we are indeed looking for ways to go about this. We will try meeting with as many people as possible.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Ms. Oehling, you said something I found somewhat scandalous. You said that seasonal workers should retrain and even, from what I understood, relocate. I don't know if you saw the special television program on China on one of the French-speaking television stations this week. I find it difficult to reconcile a situation whereby both a father and a mother—or indeed either of the two—has to work away from home. Children are left up to their own devices. This is what happens. We can't just look at things through an urban lens. There is an entire rural world out there too. And what of the family unit. Not everybody is going to drop everything and go elsewhere for a year or two. You must not forget that some seasonal workers work in the cultural and tourism industries. Their seasonal work is tourism. In my riding, there is the Festival of Colours which ends in October.

Why should these specialists who have studied, and who are experts in their field, be forced to go back to school and relocate? Because they are seasonal workers, or to make EI program administrators happy? So I was a bit shocked by that. There is a municipality in my riding which has 112 residents and is located two and a quarter hours from my home. They are entitled to live there. We cannot strip the rural area bare just to suit the urban regions.

How can you develop skills when you uproot them?

• (1155)

[*English*]

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** Thank you very much.

I think your question is well founded, but what we're talking about is having to address the issues of skill shortages and families actually having to make a living, even if it's not in optimum conditions. Perhaps what we're talking about when we talk about worker mobility is not on a grand scale but in particular regions for particular periods of time. Workers have to live just like anyone else, and need employment opportunities with mechanisms in place that would provide a measure of support to make that transition easier. People do it now. It's happening across the country, not in grand numbers, but it is happening.

A new board member of ours is from Winnipeg. There is the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation there, quite a large operation, right in downtown Winnipeg almost, and they have a tremendous shortage of workers. They have a sign outside advertising—that's how critical it is. I know in P.E.I. Russian seasonal workers are brought in to assist companies there. There used to be a lot of migration from Newfoundland to P.E.I. for three, four, or five months to cover off the seasons.

I agree with you that perhaps this is not an ideal solution, but there have to be some mechanisms in place to assist these people who are going to have to make that move for economic reasons.

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Also I have a fish farm from among other types of farms, in my riding.

There are a lot of high school dropouts. Have you thought about visiting schools and inviting young dropouts to get involved in coop programs? These young people could work for you for 15 hours, and see if they enjoy the field, while they complete their secondary studies. This idea has been developed with the various chambers of commerce in the Sherbrooke region and it seems to be working well. Industry seeks out the young people, and has them work for 15 hours a week, with the proviso that they complete their high school studies. This makes them aware of the labour shortage.

Would you be willing to visit high schools and talk with career advisors and young dropouts and offer them a 15-hour work—25-hour school mix?

[English]

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** I'm very happy that you raised that issue. In our sector we have been trying for a number of years to gather some support to provide career information to the high schools and colleges about occupations within our sector. It has been a tough sell in the seafood processing industry, as you can understand. Nevertheless, there is a need to be there, especially in the coastal communities, where there will continue to always be a fishing presence. Yes, if we could get the support to do that it would be one avenue by which we could address the notion of skill shortages.

You cited the example of aquaculture. That's not a seasonal industry in the way that the wild harvest is, and there are opportunities for full-time employment there. Yes, I would support what you say very much, and I'm sure my industry would as well.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have for that round. Thank you very much.

We'll move along to Mr. Martin, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much.

I want to shift for a moment. There's lots of talk out there today about using foreign-trained everything. We have people in the country who are doing things that don't match their expertise or their experience. But in my experience, we also have people in the country who actually want to work, and they are, if not skilled and trained, certainly motivated. The problem, though, is putting it together.

I know lots of young people in my own community who hear about something down the road. You talk about Jennifer needing 39,800 workers and the supply is only 24,000. In my experience, there are lots of people out there who want to work, but we don't seem to be able to put it together. I know there are sector councils and I know there have been reports made and recommendations made, but we're still not able to make that connection, to put the plug in the wall, so to speak.

I was out in B.C. a couple of weeks ago looking at the issue of poverty and recognizing a growing number of people who really do want to work, but for some reason or another, it just hasn't happened for them. They told me that at one point, at one shelter, companies used to come and give them a list of people they needed to do certain things. The shelter would provide them with the boots, the hard hat, and everything, and would ship them out. They'd be gone for a day, or two, or three, and work and come back. But it doesn't happen anymore. What's happening there actually is that they're bringing in offshore workers to work for \$3 and \$4 an hour, so the local folks aren't getting the jobs.

There may be jobs in other places, perhaps in the fishing industry in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, but how do you get them from B. C. to New Brunswick to do that? That's my first question.

I know there are people out there. I run into them. I talk to them. I see them. They hear about these jobs that are supposedly available. One young fellow from my own community went and took a tool and die course, thinking and hearing that there was all kinds of need for that. He can't find a job.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Ms. Steeves.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** Our industry does need those people who are motivated and want to work, no question. For us, as far as looking at the foreign worker is concerned, only about 400 people a year are coming in and saying they're automotive service technicians. It's a very small pool. So we do need to access those people who want to get into the industry.

The key there, I think, from our experience, is essential skills levels. People may have the desire to work in the industry, and for key occupations for our industry, they do need to go through the apprenticeship system, but having foundational skills in reading, numeracy, and document use, and thinking skills are key for people to get into our industry and succeed. They need those foundational skills just to get in, but once they're there, the rate of technological change is just absolutely astounding.

I know for the professional development training that we do, advanced electronics is a huge part of that and there is a huge demand by the employers. A lot of their employees who have been working in the industry five, ten, or fifteen years are having a hard time learning and understanding these advanced concepts, because they can't read a wiring diagram. Somehow they've gotten through, they're into the workplace, they've made it for so long, working in the capacity they're in, but with these advanced technologies that are coming in, they just can't keep up with it. So those foundational skills are so incredibly important for people to have, coming in.

Absolutely we want and need motivated workers, but as a way to provide these people, to set them up for success by giving them the level of skills that they need to have for specific industry occupations, we really need to partner with the education community and the apprenticeship community to ensure that we are setting up these young people or transitional workers for success.

**The Chair:** Ms. Annis.

**Ms. Susan Annis:** Mr. Martin, to come at that from another angle, career awareness materials are incredibly important. You have your young group of graduating students, and they should be aware of what the great job potentials are all across the country. It's something that as sector councils we have all been doing in our own areas. We've had great support from HRSDC for these activities. We feel they're absolutely crucial to begin to address what you're talking about. HRSDC is pulling back on this now a bit, and we're hoping that will be re-thought, because we continue to believe it's a very important piece in this puzzle.

**The Chair:** Ms. Cottingham, and then Ms. Oehling.

• (1205)

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I'd like to echo the remarks of my esteemed colleagues, but also, like Susan, come at it in a bit of a different perspective.

I think one of the challenges that industry is facing is the change in our whole technology platform. The way we looked at work when the baby boomers came into the workforce is very different from the way it is now. The need for science- and technology-driven positions has been estimated by a study in the United States to have increased five times faster than the population change or the labour force change. We can't graduate enough people right now to meet the needs of the business.

If you're looking at an industry such as electricity—highly regulated, with important safety considerations—it's extremely important for us to deal with regulated professions and certifications. What it takes for a worker to achieve a position in our business quite often is a significant level of training. For a nuclear operator, from the point they start community college to the point they're actually considered able to sustain a shift solely on their own is ten years. We are very challenged in that context, because we are trying to protect public safety to maintain extremely technical complex equipment and we require very knowledgeable people.

Our industry, as it gets more computerized, is going to face this problem more and more. The time and support it takes to transition a worker who, as Jennifer says, is lacking essential skills is significant, and the dollar investment is significant. It would be very challenging

for an individual employer to do but is certainly an important role for government.

**The Chair:** We're almost out of time, but I'll give Ms. Oehling a quick comment on this.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** To speak to your point, Mr. Martin, in terms of what our work has been in British Columbia working with disadvantaged groups, we have a partnership with two organizations there. One is called ASPECT. You may have heard of it; it helps economically disadvantaged people in the province. Also, there is SUCCESS, which is a support group for Chinese immigrants. We have partnered with them and our seafood processing companies, whereby potential workers receive training on how to work in a fish plant. The companies will then engage their services for a period of time. It is for short-term employment, but it fills the need at the local level.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That's all the time we have.

I've just been informed by the clerk that it looks as though that group, ASPECT, is going to appear before our committee when we're out in Vancouver. It will be good to hear from them as well.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Storseth, we'll going to ask you for seven minutes of final questions for this round.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank everybody for coming forward and giving us your presentations.

I think it's absolutely critical that we continue to expand the dialogue between government and sector councils. You give a very good national glimpse of what each one of your industries is experiencing.

Madame Rivet, I would like to talk to you a bit about the biotechnology area and the considerable support in Canada we've found for the research side of your business. It's been going beyond the research and discovery stages that we've neglected in the past. Could you explain to me a little about the concepts of interdisciplinary training and the competency assessments you talked about in your brief, and how this could help grow the industry?

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** That would be my pleasure.

You're right, most of the biotechnology that you hear about is an individual in a research lab with a great discovery who takes off and forms a company, and all of a sudden he is faced with human resource things, soft skills, and has to organize it and talk to people. It's very difficult. They have to find money to get their products.

To get a product into commercialization can take 25 or 30 years, and you have to cross the valley of death, they call it, where there is nobody who wants to give you any financing and if you don't get that financing you're going to die. Your company will die.

What we're looking at is that even when you have a master's or a PhD, you have skills and competencies that you absolutely require to be successful in a sector. What we're looking at is finding ways for foreign immigrants as well as Canadians, people transitioning, new entrants of any type, to develop those competencies and to identify them for them so they can get them on the job and get the training they require. What we're trying to do is develop the competencies and the career profiles so people can understand what that means. We can transition it from different professions and make them workable. What we need is a certification process led by industry so that they will buy into it and say if someone has been certified and has those competencies, they won't feel there is a risk. They'll say that's great, you're in, and they keep going.

On top of that, we have all these emerging technologies that are coming about and we have to train them immediately again. It is always an ongoing thing. We're never going to be stopping learning. The industry realizes this, and they feel that the competency kind of approach and a practical assessment when you can't prove it any other way, which deals with immigrants as well, is a way of getting them in there and working productively for Canada.

• (1210)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Do you think the traditional system is equipped to meet the industry's needs in this regard? Can it currently provide the interdisciplinary training that can be required?

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** At this very moment I would say no, it isn't ready. And what the industry also wants the council to help them with is to get to the curriculum and modify it as much as possible, but recognizing again that we will need more competencies in the future and we'll have to modify it consistently. We need a partnership with the colleges and universities, secondary schools, and even primary schools. We're working with the Toronto District School Board at the moment, trying to get them to bring that career awareness, getting people to study science and math again, and in the aboriginal population as well, and trying to get people aware of it, because it takes a long time to get through the education one needs for the biotechnology sector.

Having said that, because they're going into production and commercialization, we also have positions in manufacturing. The issue there is that we need the literacy skills there because it's a very highly regulated area as well, as you can appreciate, for human health, for any of the foods that we develop, etc.

We have a wide variety of skills we require. They are interdisciplinary and they're going to continue being interdisciplinary, and we need to have the colleges and universities working in partnership with us to modify the curriculum as needs be, looking more at competencies than the typical credentialing that we normally get.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** In ESL and some of the other interdisciplinary training help for immigrants and some of these other sectors that you will undoubtedly be looking at for helping to fill some of the labour needs you have, some of the colleges that specialize in this, I have found, have been some of the more private colleges, the career colleges. Have you dealt with them at all?

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** We're starting to work with them to see exactly what they provide, etc. We're also developing online

modules for immigrants, which they could take even before they come to Canada, on things like terminology in our biotechnology environment, acronyms, what it is like to work in biotechnology, the culture, the entrepreneurial spirit, and that kind of thing. We're trying to develop all of that in online modules to initiate that, but we have to go further than that. We're not trying to replace the existing infrastructure; we're just trying to work in partnership with them and get that a little bit further ahead.

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** All right, I'll try to make this quick then. I want to talk a little bit to the electricity sector.

One of the things we always talk about is mobility between provinces. I would see that as being a real difficulty in your sector because of the different regulations in each province, the different set-up within each different province on how that goes. Are you finding some provinces more adaptable for that, with more worker mobility coming out of that?

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** The industry is very capable in terms of worker mobility because it is an industry that has depended, when it has needed somebody, typically on the jurisdiction next door. So they usually have a very good understanding of their colleagues' work and skills and capabilities. Our primary trades are mostly red seal, which means that they are of course part of a cross-Canada curriculum process.

So worker mobility is possible. The thing is, it's not always possible in the context of what the worker wants. To my point about cross-jurisdictional choices that people might make, we have significant need for workers in the north, in small towns and rural areas, and, as you know, Canada is becoming increasingly urbanized in terms of its workforce population. The folks we depended on, particularly our farm community, which used to be a very good source of people who would want to stay in small-town-whatever and work for the local power company as an off-farm experience, are not there for us any more. The farm population between the last two censuses has dropped 30%. So here we are extremely challenged to find our small-town people with the reliability support.

Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** That's great.

That ends our first round of seven minutes, and we're going to move to our second round, which will be five minutes. Ms. Brown will start us off.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your presentations.

I agree with Ms. Cottingham and her partner, who has left, about the primary nature of electrical workers. Other people can't go to work if there's no electricity. So the labour shortage isn't quite as pressing there, even though within your own areas I know you feel it is.

In addition to the obvious need, say, for electrical engineers and the obvious need in every business for business administration people, what are the kinds of job titles that would show up in the workforce of a utility? What kinds of workers are you looking for? What are they called?

•(1215)

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** Oh, it's an extremely broad spectrum. Our most critical worker shortage already exists today. Our study as of 2004, copies of which I will leave with the clerk, show that power line workers, the people who absolutely support the build and the maintenance as well as crisis intervention for your electrical workers, are already short. Currently we have one company in Canada that is short 40 experienced journeymen. That's a crisis just in terms of operational service and maintenance support, but it's also a crisis because if you want to train new apprentices you have to have journeymen. You have to have experienced people. They don't have enough people to take off the line to train, so they're caught between a rock and a hard place.

In a hydro facility you would have millwrights, boilermakers, and quite a number of different industrial trades apart from the iconic electrician. In terms of the support staff, you would have people who would do evaluation and tests, occupational health and safety—very important in our business—significant training needs. And of course the engineering staff are broad—they're not just electricals; we need civils and mechanicals as well.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Okay, thank you.

On the fish worker picture, when I came here 13 years ago, the picture of a town with a fish-packing plant was a town where for some months of the year there were a certain number of jobs, and it seemed from the descriptions that there were at least ten workers for each of those jobs. We know that within families, somebody would take the job for a certain number of weeks until they qualified for EI, and then the next week their brother would show up so that he could get his number of weeks that were required, because EI essentially kept them alive over the winter. It seems that even with the demographic change, the picture that was drawn for us then would suggest that there were so many people looking for work, I'm finding it hard to believe there aren't enough of them now.

So where did those people go, other than to Alberta? Did that generation of fish workers not have very many children? Did they all leave, or are they not educated enough to do the jobs in the new plants?

**Mr. Phil LeBlanc:** I'll try to address that.

In an area such as where we are in southwest Nova Scotia, the population hasn't really changed over the last hundred years. It's not that we have fewer workers than we did before, but it's regional in nature too. Some regions in our region have a shortage of workers willing to work in the fish plants. It's not seen as a prime job, to go work in a fish plant. There are other regions, in Newfoundland for instance, where there are communities of people who are willing to work and the plant, for whatever reason, has closed and there's no work in that region. So when you look at it from a national perspective, it's very different from region to region.

In our area, for instance, because of the seasonal nature in the summertime, there tend to be enough workers, but right now we do have a major crunch for workers because all the university students are gone, and at certain times of the year there is very much a shortage.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** You say the permanent population of the town has remained the same.

**Mr. Phil LeBlanc:** It has, yes.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Is it that people are choosing to do other kinds of jobs that seem to be more appealing to them?

If the population has remained the same and you still have these jobs, and there's a shortage, I don't get it.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** I think Phil was talking about his area in Nova Scotia, but I know that in other regions—let's take Newfoundland, for example—there has been a downsizing in the population, and I believe the statistics bear that out. A lot of the young people are leaving because they can't find permanent jobs in their province. Coupled with that, the older folks are moving and taking very lucrative jobs in Calgary, for example. All of this just compounds the problem we have with skill shortages.

On top of that, with the rationalization of the industry in the early 1990s and the more recent downsizing of the industry because times are tough and there's competition from other nations, it has become increasingly difficult to survive. Earlier we talked about having to address the issue of the management of the fisheries. There is a niche for Canadian processors, and I didn't have a chance to address that in my presentation due to time constraints. They are selling high premier Canadian product, groundfish, to the U.K. for a very high amount—there is none of this twice-frozen product that crosses the sea a number of times with something lost in the taste of it—so we have an opportunity to do better, but we need to find the appropriate workers. The skill level in today's world is at a higher level than it was in the early 1990s, so we need to address that.

•(1220)

**The Chair:** We'll move to Madame Demers for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing before us this morning.

It been most edifying and extremely fascinating to hear what you have to say about the problems relating to your specific industries. It fascinates me to think that over the past 20 years, we have been able, as human beings, to adapt, to create, to invent, to understand and to assimilate new technologies across many fields, including computers, while simultaneously, we have lacked the necessary long-term vision required to see that our labour force is aging. This does fascinate me given that if today these 50, 55 or 60 year olds were already professionals 20 years ago, it should have been obvious that they were going to get older, especially since unions negotiated collective agreements to get pension plans for workers so that they would stop working at 56 years of age.

So I am surprised to see us in today's situation. It is also very upsetting because I have not heard any of you refer to a greater female presence in the labour force, and the need to get more women on board to meet needs and to fill positions such as power line riggers or, in the auto sector, mechanics, small engine mechanics, and so on. The same applies to the biotechnology sector, although I believe there are a few more women in working in that sector, and I am very glad about that.

On the one hand we want a renewed labour market and yet on the other hand we seem to be relying on old methods to find this labour force.

My question is directed to Ms. Steeves and especially to Ms. Cottingham, as you both work in areas where I think the possibility of achieving greater female representation is most real, and yet your remarks did not reflect this.

[English]

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I would say that the industry has tried very hard. We have a couple of challenges there.

We rely on the educational institutions and their diversity profiles to support us. One of the things that I said to the deans of engineering in Canada when I spoke to them was that they have to do a better job so that we can do a better job. This is true for all equity communities; we are very challenged in that capacity.

In regard to the trades, in our iconic trade, the power line workers, we have had some success in some provinces with women. Our challenge is retention. It's a job that has shifts; you go up poles in rotten weather, and when people develop a family life, it's not as compatible as they would like, so women come, but they don't stay. I'm not sure that there's an easy way to address that.

It would be fair to say that we are very conscious that we need to improve our equity profile. We have a community of challenges there. One is with our educational providers—we need them to support us and we need them to have strong equity initiatives—but likewise we need to think about how we organize our work. Are there things that we can do differently?

Indeed, as a new council, we are presenting our slate to the Government of Canada for financial support; power line workers and equity improvement make up one of those areas.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** We've been working with the educational community, but certainly a lot more work needs to be done there, so that careers in our industry are presented to young women and young men as being viable, excellent careers for them. Less than 3%, I think it is, of our industry is female.

It is slow to change, for sure, but I think for the education community this is the importance of career information and partnerships with industry and various levels of government: to ensure that young people realize a connection between what they're learning in school and all the different career paths it could lead to.

Right now we struggle with the educational community's having a 30-year-old view of what it takes to work in some industries. I'm sure other industries find the same thing.

It is really about educating the education community and having the resources to do it. Being a national sector council, we certainly try to do that working on a national basis, but are trying to work with the school boards. We are working with the Toronto district school board on a pilot project to try to address those various issues: essential skills, and that there are various careers in the industry for young ladies.

The young ladies who do come in, I've heard, do very well. I know from the college instructors that a lot of young women will

come in and start as automotive service technicians, but as they learn about the breadth of the industry they gravitate to the parts side of things or to service adviser, where they are using people skills. They are very good at those sorts of occupations. A lot of dealerships are putting women in those service adviser positions now, because it is women who are very often dropping off the family vehicle, so there is a comfort level there.

•(1225)

**The Chair:** That is all the time we have. Thank you very much. Five minutes goes quite quickly.

Mr. Martin, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Thank you.

How much of this disjoint is from not paying people enough? In my community I have people coming in and saying, we can't get workers because now we have this big call centre industry that's developed and we can't get people in here.

My first thought—I don't always articulate it—is that if you pay them more, you'll probably get them back, because what you're offering is actually a better workplace environment, in those terms. I often wonder whether, in the old marketplace that we often hold up as the “hidden hand” of the force out there, sometimes getting people into your industry is a factor of how much you pay them. If it is a highly paid job, they'll do the education and training and will come and work for you.

I was in New Brunswick talking about child care and was shocked to discover that there were lots of people moving into child care, but as soon as they got an opportunity to work at a call centre, which was paying \$10 or \$12 an hour, they were moving to the call centre out of child care, which in my view would have been a much more satisfying career, perhaps.

But that is not the question I wanted to ask. I want to ask Susan this in terms of her sector. What is the impact of the cuts to the volunteer and non-profit sector and the total demolishing of the social economy initiative? What's that going to do to your sector?

**Ms. Susan Annis:** Our sector is certainly feeling the effects of the recent cuts in a number of different ways. We have a lot of not-for-profit organizations in the sector. They feel the impact of some of those cuts. The museums assistance programs specifically is one. I am not sure if you're asking for specifics, but that's an example of one.

This is a challenge for us. There is no question that this part of our sector really does need public support, as the not-for-profit voluntary sector, which has its own sector council, also does.

On the other side of this sector, though, we have a lot of big business. You have big publishing firms, you have Alliance Atlantis, you have the big film companies. They would be looking at life quite differently from the not-for-profit side.

The not-for-profit side is like the R and D in the cultural sector. It is absolutely key. It is like the heart; it's small, but it pumps the blood and makes it work.

Does that respond a bit?



**Mr. Tony Martin:** So that people understand, was the socio-economic initiative of any interest or value to your sector?

• (1230)

**Ms. Susan Annis:** We certainly felt a part of it and were involved in the discussions. The Canadian Conference of the Arts was the voice for the cultural sector in those discussions and around those tables. We were natural partners in that discussion.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Maybe we'll go back to the question of wages. Does anybody want to jump in here? The reason we're not making the connect is that the industries looking for people aren't paying enough. If they did, people would be willing to do the training, spend the time, make the investment, and actually come and work in your industry.

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I'd like to respond to that.

We're a well-paid business. People make a very solid salary in the electricity business at every level of the company. One of our challenges is to the point that Susan made earlier around career awareness.

Recently the Ontario companies did a study that looked at people's awareness of trades in the business and found that general awareness was reasonably high among both parents and youth, in the 60% to 70% range, but awareness of opportunities in the utilities business was 2%.

So we have a significant challenge in helping the understanding of what kinds of career paths we can provide. Part of the career awareness piece is helping them understand we're not about old technology. People think we're somehow not cool and not exciting, and you're not going to be working with computerized things—that it's all somehow gears and levers, and whatever, which excites a small proportion of the population, but not everyone. Yet we're very high-tech. We have lots of great opportunities and lots of career paths for people. So our challenge is helping them understand that they're there.

**The Chair:** Ms. Annis, just a quick response.

**Ms. Susan Annis:** Another way to think about compensation is the benefits that are available to workers. In our sector, I've mentioned that social benefits aren't available to the large number of self-employed. That's also true about the child care sector. So when they go to call centres, maybe they don't only get increased incomes, but they also get benefits, and that's a huge issue.

**The Chair:** Thank you. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move to our last questioner of the second round. Mr. Brown, you have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being here today.

I come from a riding an hour north of Toronto, where Georgian College has a program focusing on the auto trades, which certainly encourages apprenticeships.

I want to delve a bit into what CARS has put forward, in terms of their proposal about the fifty-fifty cost-shared arrangement, to get your comments on what the cost of that would be for the federal

government. What comments do you have for us on the initiative in budget 2006 for the apprenticeship training grant?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** The recommendation I spoke to is a program that we administered in the early 1990s—and it worked tremendously well—where we leveraged federal funding with industry training dollars.

The program worked over a three-year period for about \$7 million. We set up credits with the industry, so that it really did build a training culture among those who participated in the program. We lined up people like Canadian Tire Corporation and Midas—several big players in the Canadian industry to ante in, to commit some dollars. They felt that these were good investments, that they were getting a return on their training investment.

It was quite a complex program to administer, but the training selection went through us. We made sure that it was of a certain quality, and the effects of that program carry on today.

From our research, the people who subscribe to our interactive distance learning and other training programs came out of this initial program from the early 1990s for the most part, because they started getting into training. They started budgeting for and organizing training. It became a part of their corporate culture and it carries on today.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** What would the cost be for the federal government?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** The program as a whole was about \$7 million, and about 30,000 people were trained during that period.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** If it was reintroduced, do you think it would be the same amount today?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** I think it could be done for that, yes.

• (1235)

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** This is a general question to everyone. What are your centres doing to encourage more apprenticeship opportunities?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** We've been working with the education community to promote careers in our industry to young people and get them thinking about careers in the industry and moving into apprenticeship programs. The other thing we've been doing is we've developed an accreditation program with some initial funding from the federal government, which has ended. The accreditation program, through which we accredit post-secondary motive power programs, carries on today. We look at curriculum, equipment, teacher time, and a lot of different criteria to ensure that young people who do have the initiative to get themselves into training to enter occupations have a very high quality training experience. Currently we have about 28 programs across Canada nationally accredited.

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** The electricity industry has significant apprenticeship programs across Canada. One of the interesting things that came out of the period of belt tightening in the 1990s was that many corporations saw apprenticeship programs as an extra. About 30% of our businesses as of 2004 did not have apprenticeship programs.

One of the things that I would say we are doing, and this is with the help of the Government of Canada, is just getting some solid data as to why you need to have them, why there is an opportunity to have them. Our businesses have to go before the regulators and defend their investment in training programs. Things like the sector study that the Government of Canada assisted us with helped them in demonstrating why there is a need. We have businesses that have said to us that they have gone before the regulator, and the regulator has said “why should we invest, why don't you just take from the jurisdiction next door”—hardly smart business planning.

On understanding the return of investment in apprenticeship, there was a study funded recently by the Government of Canada with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum with a certain community of trades that was extremely helpful for our businesses to be able to say here's the return on actually putting a buck in for an apprenticeship program: the return is \$1.38 for every dollar invested. That type of bottom-line impact is how you achieve program development with key influencers, whether they be senior leadership in a business or senior leadership in the policy environment.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have, Mr. Brown. Thank you very much.

We're going to move now into our final round, and we have Mr. D'Amours for five minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for appearing before the committee today.

I am going to start with some observations. One of the things mentioned earlier is the fact that regions in this country are becoming more urban than rural and there is a problem with employment. Let us go back in time. Before going into politics, I was in economic development. When you work in economic development, you take into account the diversity of your suppliers, clients, and markets.

In some of the more rural regions of the country, there are people who appreciate the quality of life and the environment they live in. In certain cases, they are often forced to go away to study, but they would also like to be in a position to go back home.

Have the various organizations or sectors that you represent thought about the fact that the workers that you so desperately need might like to be able to go back home to where they were born, to work, which would create for your a permanent pool of people who could work in your sectors?

It is not because people work in a rural environment — my riding is rural — that they are uneducated. In reality, in my riding, in Northern New Brunswick, there are two community colleges and a university. Partnerships between industry and these teaching institutions can easily solve the training problems for industry, regardless of what industry we are talking about.

At the same time, instead of always sending employees or individuals to other regions, have the companies that you represent considered doing the opposite? There would be no training problems. People would be stable, because they are in the community they want to return to. Even people who go to work in other provinces say so. They would like to go back to their own

region. That would represent incredible stability for the various industries. I understand that it would be more difficult for some industries, but in most cases, it is possible.

My riding has a seaport, a railway, roads, and airports. What more do you need when you have people, knowledge, and infrastructure? I would like to hear your reactions to that.

● (1240)

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** Prior to today, I might have had trouble answering your question, but I now have a better understanding of the issue of health and pharmacology products and new companies. They often need to be close to one another to continue to develop biotechnology. Not all companies will survive. Sometimes, people want to be able to move to another company to pursue their career.

We now have agricultural and forestry biotechnologies. There is also bio-fuel here, in Ottawa. We are trying to find a place to set up a bio-fuel and ethanol plant. I know that biotechnology is now in your area.

Initially, it is a little bit difficult with respect to research, but there are many advantages. In fact, biotechnology is very important for agriculture in Saskatchewan. We also provide a great deal of assistance to farmers.

[English]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** And in terms of the auto sector?

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** As for the automotive repair and service sector, those folks are everywhere, rural and urban. Everybody has a vehicle. They all need to be repaired at some point or another.

The New Brunswick community college in Bathurst is one of our accredited programs. They offer excellent automotive repair training and collision.

The challenge for our industry is to release people to go to training to upgrade their skills. If you're in a rural location, it's not just the cost of training. It's the downtime, the loss of productivity while that person or two people are away on training, if they have to go to Moncton or to Bathurst, for example. So what we came up with was our interactive distance learning, and that has worked very well.

The way it works is that a shop has a satellite dish and a television set in their lunch room or some common area in the shop, and we broadcast upgrade training—not apprenticeship training but upgrade training once they're in the workforce—so they can keep their skills updated.

That has worked very well, especially for rural communities, because it is such a challenge to keep their skills updated, and if they don't, their employability is greatly diminished, especially in our industry. So ways to bring training into the workplace are very key for our industries, and probably for others.

If you look at a corporation like Canadian Tire, they have stores everywhere across Canada and certainly need to attain training.

So there's interactive distance learning, distance training. We're now looking into e-learning, what the industry's capacity would be to receive training in that format.

Ensuring that people's skills are upgraded and keeping them employable is key, but they're certainly employable in these rural communities.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's all the time we have for that question.

I just want to ask a quick question. I know we talk about training, and training, and training. I realize that the federal government does offer some incentives, but I also realize that employers are in that boat as well.

What are your thought processes on employers? Should employers be stepping up to the plate for skill training, and are they? Obviously they are, probably at various levels, at various times. Is there more need for employers to be stepping up? That's the first part of the question.

Secondly, is there a way a government could encourage them to do that? I think I know the answer to that, but what kinds of things can we as a government do to encourage more of that?

I don't know who wants to take a stab at that first. Go ahead, Ms. Rivet.

• (1245)

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** Yes, the federal government could certainly help us with putting in internships.

And how would the companies help? They would actually take the time away from trying to keep their companies surviving and help train these people and make them competitive and marketable, and help them out.

So that's an internship part, where you don't really need to have the credentials recognized; you need to have the competencies recognized. That's where we could work in partnership with the federal government.

And how do the companies help? They do help. They help with our sector councils, they help with on-the-job training, they help with colleges and universities, and so they do it in their means, as much as they can, as well. Yes, there's lots of room for improvement, but they're trying.

**The Chair:** I have a quick follow-up about internships. What does that mean? Does the government pay for the time? What exactly...?

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** Right now the federal government does subsidize what's called a career focus program, and we administer that program. The federal government subsidizes one-third of the salary of the people who are going in. They are people who have never worked in biotechnology; we are trying to make them aware of the sector and get them interested. That is filled up immediately. Everybody loves it, and the evaluation of it is that over 90% of the people—I can't remember the exact figure, but it's quite high—have been hired by the biotechnology companies afterwards.

It's very promising, but the internship area is even more than that; it is to help not only the people who are in transition—new entrants—but also foreign professionals who are coming in.

**The Chair:** Ms. Annis.

**Ms. Susan Annis:** The internship program is terrific. It is aimed at youth up to 29, and it fulfills a very important function. I think that it

would be useful for the government—if it can, given jurisdictional issues—to support mentorships or something that would allow for this to happen for older workers. Mentorship is just another take on the same idea.

To respond specifically to your question about training, I think that yes, employers do have to recognize their role, and I think that is slowly changing, not only in our sector but, from what I hear, across the workplace.

I would draw your attention to the law of one percent in Québec, which is a wonderful law at the provincial level that requires contributions to a training pool at a certain *masse salariale*. I think it's salary levels of \$1 million or more—anyhow, there are criteria for it. It provides a central training pool that ensures workers have access to training. This is a wonderful example that works really well in Quebec, and it has been extended to work in the case of self-employed workers as well.

**The Chair:** Is that a matching program, meaning the employer, or is it strictly funded by the government?

**Ms. France Bonsant:** It is the employers.

**Ms. Susan Annis:** It's one percent of their revenues.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I'd like to know the federal government's role in technology development in that context. One of the challenges for our businesses that engage in new technology—and I know Colette would agree with me—is that they're small people. They are trying to grow and develop their businesses. We certainly see this in the renewable sector. They can't sustain it themselves—they're busy trying to manage their businesses—and they can't find places where they can achieve training.

One of the areas in which the government can certainly support the development of new technologies is in the community college and university system, in support to post-secondary education through their work with the provinces; we find that our educational institutions are struggling to develop programming supports such as curriculum development for new technologies.

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

That's it for the round of questions. Was there anyone else? We have a few minutes left. Does anyone have another follow-up question they want to go ahead with?

Yes, Madame Demers; you may have a quick question.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. You are kind.

Ladies, as I mentioned earlier, we know that life expectancy has increased. For women, it is now 83, whereas for men, unfortunately for them, it is still 79. Despite that, I think most people retire from the workforce at 56, but in another job. That is the case for nurses and many other professions.

Is the same thing happening in your industries? Have you considered changing work shifts to enable people to remain in a job where they have acquired skills? Are you not facing a shortage of employees in some sectors because several contractors have been used by companies to do part of the work? That situation occurred in Quebec, at Bell Canada.

• (1250)

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Cottingham.

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I think there are a couple of pieces to that. Certainly for our business we have a complex organizational profile. One of our businesses that's a crown corporation attempted to look at a modified work program to retain older workers and ran straight into their province's superannuation act and realized that they'd have to change the superannuation act in the province to bring those workers back or to keep them on modified work. There are some complex issues if you are a crown corporation or a government-owned organization.

We also surveyed our employees. Do you know what they told us? They said most of them really didn't want to come back. They liked their work, we had great employee engagement scores, they were happy with the business, but they had other plans for after age 56—perhaps family, cottage, golfing, goodness knows, but they really thought it was time to move on.

One of our unions has developed a very effective program to bring back retired workers as contingent labour here in the province of Ontario where it's possible they didn't have the superannuation complexities. They've created a hiring hall and workers who are retired can sign up with the hiring hall. If the company needs a short-term employee replacement, they have somebody who already is known to the company—and importantly for our business, is also security-cleared, which is another challenge for us with internationally trained workers—and they can step right into the role. That has proven very successful. We'd like to see some opportunities for that model in other places.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Ms. Oehling, did you want to add to that?

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** We haven't taken a comprehensive approach to this across the nation, but I can say that a number of employers, especially in the larger firms, where they have key workers and want to keep them, will shift their duties to something more amenable to their age and station in life, and that way they maintain that corporate knowledge.

We also found we develop a lot of training products but we are not deliverers of the training. We have partnered with the community colleges and sometimes private sector individuals, especially in the remote regions, and many of the people.... CFIA inspectors become instructors, people with good industry experience become instructors, and they also become mentors for younger people, often on a part-time basis.

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

Madame Bonsant wanted a quick question.

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** I told you earlier that my riding is located in a rural area. It does not have oil sands or oil. Some of my constituents who used to work in sectors like textiles, shoes, and furniture have lost their jobs. They are 52 or 53 years old.

How many of you would be prepared to hire these people tomorrow morning if they had been retrained in another area, even if they are 50 or older?

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Oehling, go ahead.

**Ms. Johanna Oehling:** I believe if they were willing and able to work in our industry and could acquire the skills, that would be a wonderful opportunity for us. Wonderful.

[Translation]

**Ms. Colette Rivet:** That is the case in biotechnology. If we could show them what to do in terms of production, they would be hired.

[English]

**Ms. Catherine Cottingham:** I would say there is definitely significant interest, particularly with trades positions. Everybody is short of trades positions. The re-skilling pieces are a really important one, and transition programs for workers are an area of interest we're actually trying to explore right now.

**Ms. Jennifer Steeves:** In our industry we have a mentor-coach program, and these experienced people are incredible mentors and coaches because they know their trade inside out, so transferring and developing those skills has kept people at retirement age in our workforce longer, passing on their knowledge to the young people; it's very important.

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** I am happy to hear that, because one of my constituents sent out 78 resumé's in three months and never received a call. I am going to take note of your names.

[English]

**The Chair:** Okay.

I want to thank all the witnesses who came before us today. We want to thank you for taking the time. Once again, this committee believes employability is a pretty important issue, and certainly is a crisis that will continue to grow for the next few years. That's why we're undertaking this and moving forward. Your input has been greatly appreciated and noted, and as we continue to hear from other groups this will reinforce and also give us ideas to make recommendations to the government to move forward on it.

Thank you very much for being here today.

• (1255)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Point of order, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** In relation to the motion the committee passed on Tuesday, can you tell me if that's been tabled in the House? If not, when will it be tabled?

**The Chair:** I kind of figured you were going to ask that question today. I tabled it this morning at 10 o'clock.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** That was just for you. I knew you were going to ask that question. I didn't want to do it, but we went for it anyway.

I'll take Ms. Brown and then Mr. Martin.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Mr. Chairman, I believe we have some meetings coming up with the ministers, and I would like to place a formal request that those meetings be televised. I think we can have our turn in the television rooms if we put the request in.

**The Chair:** I will certainly ask that question.

Mr. Martin is next.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I note that the minister isn't going to come on October 17. I believe that's probably because we're going to do her estimates in the committee of the whole. My hope—and I think you have confirmed it—is that we will meet on the 17th and begin the study of the cuts.

**The Chair:** Mr. Martin, yes, it is as we discussed this morning. The clerk and I chatted when we found out that Ms. Finley couldn't make it, so we're going to start that. The clerk has asked that a list of witnesses be forwarded to her office by Friday. The suggestion is that we bring in the department to discuss some of those cuts, and then we'll move forward on that.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** If by chance the Minister of Labour all of a sudden isn't able to come on October 19, I would suggest as well that we continue to study this issue—that we not miss a meeting—because we have too much to do.

**The Chair:** Most definitely.

He's indicated he will be here, but I would agree with you, Mr. Martin, that if he is not able to, we will continue along the track we've taken.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Are we having the departmental heads on October 17?

**The Chair:** That's what we're looking at right now.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Okay, and shall we give you a list of witnesses?

**The Chair:** Give us a list of witnesses. We've asked the department heads to come in, and that's the way we're going right now.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right.

Thank you very much once again.

The meeting is adjourned.

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