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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (0835)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study on employability in Canada will commence.

We'd just like to thank the witnesses for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here today.

On a couple of housekeeping matters, you'll have seven minutes each with your opening statements. I'll give you a one-minute sign just to help you wrap up. We'll then start with the first round of questions for seven minutes and move to a second round of five minutes.

Once again, we want to thank you for being here.

If we could just start with our opening statements, we're going to start with Ms. Gunia for seven minutes.

Ms. Trudi Gunia (As an Individual): I guess you all have my paper before you. Do I go through the whole paper or just summarize?

The Chair: You have seven minutes, so you summarize in whatever way you'd like.

Go ahead.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: My concern is as a senior who's approaching a pensionable age next year. I've been seeing a lot of articles about seniors being kept in the workforce. My concern isn't with seniors 55 plus, but with 65 plus. The stats seem to be going up, with people 65 and over working. That is not a future I look forward to.

There are also a lot of articles and studies. I have one by the C.D. Howe Institute. The title of the paper from the institute is "Boomers carry a time bomb". They're calculating how much it's going to cost to take care of seniors, health care, and otherwise. I find that is a little scary too, when we start talking about seniors costing too much, so perhaps it would be a good idea to keep them working until 70 or 75. I think that's pretty scary.

First, I have stats on the U.S. workforce, and all of the stats show a gradual increase in seniors, women more so than men, who are staying in the workforce. I think that is due in great part to not having enough money to survive on the pensions we're given, especially if you're in the lower-income bracket.

In the one sense, there are still employers.... I haven't anything against people wanting to stay in the workforce, if they really want to do it. And there are going to be seniors who have to because of their financial situation. But I think the government has to look at addressing that by raising the pensions for those who really need to have an increase.

In Europe, these countries are finding ways to.... They're also challenged with an aging workforce. I've given specific industries here. This is on the second page. They find they must invest in training to increase their productivity. In a study from 2002 of more than 500 German companies, 22% stated aging of their workforce represented a problem for their organizations; 39% indicated they were facing challenges associated with shortages of labour.

The government says that, on the one hand, we don't have the young population, so we're going to save on education and taking care of the young in the workforce. But I think it's incumbent to really find a way to train our young people, mentor them, perhaps through the older workers too. That is what I've suggested here.

There is a program by IBM Global Services that recommends consideration and preservation of critical knowledge. One approach elicits employees' experiential or tacit knowledge through detailed interviewing or documentation explicitly capturing and storing these insights. Mentoring arrangements and communities of practice can also encourage mature workers to pass knowledge down to the next generation.

I think that's one way employers could benefit, not by keeping workers on until they're 70 or 75, but by garnering the knowledge they've gained over the years.

On page 3 I talk about how our lives have changed over the years, why women entered the workforce, what sorts of roles or careers they took, and how that changed in wartime, and then after the war women went back into the home. Then in the sixties and seventies many were forced, economically, to take jobs outside, whether they wanted to or not. Many did want to as well. But it was an economic necessity, because the cost of living had increased and because of raising children, and so on.

I go over how I feel that in this day and age women are not the ones who are so much wanting to stay in the workforce as are men, because I think that men haven't had the full duties of the household, along with raising the children.

● (0840)

When women reach age 65 they are perhaps looking forward to a little leisure in their lives, or maybe they're at a loss over what to do because they're used to working for much longer—that being their only job in many cases, but maybe not so much now.

I talk about the working poor. Perhaps some solutions are a guaranteed annual income, or raising the minimum wage. There are some examples here of collective bargaining and EI reform.

I talk about health. I don't buy it that we're healthier people. I think we're supplemented and sustained through medications. We have more of them now. That doesn't necessarily mean we're healthy people.

As we age everything changes—our ability to grasp new technologies, our reflexes, our mobility, our mode of life, and our outlook on life. I'm working part-time, and every time new developments come along with the computer—and they change every year—I have a problem. I have to admit it.

I've summarized my paper pretty much.

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

Ms. Cousyn, I understand you have to leave by 9:30, so you may make your presentation now.

Ms. Janis Cousyn (Proprietor, Calories Restaurants): I apologize for that misunderstanding, but I've never been to one of these forums. I also have to apologize for my husband, Rémi. He intended to be here, but we are talking about a labour shortage today, and since this is a statutory holiday week, unfortunately he's doing bread this morning.

I'm not here on behalf of the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. I am on the board of directors of that association, and I know you have received their submission. It has some strong recommendations that I wholeheartedly endorse. However, I am here on behalf of myself and my husband as small independent operators and owners of Calories Bakery & Restaurant on Broadway Avenue here in Saskatoon. It is a 20-year established restaurant and we have 35-plus employees, at least 20 of whom are full-time.

I don't believe that my fellow small local operators in the industry have any idea of the size of the crisis that's looming ahead. I perceive that many are still in growth mode. I was at a local business forum just recently with lots of restaurateurs from our street, and they're starting to feel it, but they aren't in tune with the statistics. I've seen the statistics, so I'm acutely aware of what we're facing and what's ahead. As such, our company has chosen to delay an expansion that we had intended to pursue. We want to wait to see if we can stabilize our problem at our existing location.

When I first heard about this looming labour crisis last spring, I thought, "Oh, we won't see it in Saskatchewan for a long time. We certainly won't see it in our business for a long time. Our staff is like family. Many have been with us for years and years." But that's not the case. As of August, we've felt an incredible difference, and it's across the board. We're talking about qualified workers and entry-level workers. We're seeing it in the front of the house and the back of the house.

We're already starting to struggle, and I really fear for the future and for the future of our industry. We can't compete with wages that are being offered in Alberta. We can't compete with the oil patch. We can only work ourselves, with our managers who choose to stay on with us in Saskatchewan and Saskatoon. It's so hard. I fear for the health implications in the future as we and our managers are required to take on more and more.

We've started to spend months recruiting. We've never seen that before. We just can't replace the workers who are moving on. Last summer we lost a qualified baker to the oil patch. We can't hire dishwashers. The kids these days just aren't really interested in that kind of work. We've looked at working with disabled workers and trying to train them, but there's an incredible lack of support. There are small programs for that, but they're just not enough.

I know that CRSA is advocating an increase in immigration and temporary work visas. That has been their approach, but I don't think that's the solution for Saskatchewan. We have a huge workforce here that's not being used to its full capacity. We have an aboriginal community that needs to come into the fold. There's huge potential to train and integrate these people into our industry.

There needs to be a fundamental shift in the EI and the social assistance programs. They need to become top-up systems rather than clawback systems. Rather than penalizing workers for getting back into the workforce, or changing from a higher-paying job to a lower-paying job, if we change the system so we are topping up their wages rather than clawing them back, that would make a huge difference.

● (0845)

We need to adapt to the new workplace and the new workforce, have better worker mobility, and use older workers if they want to work in our industry, without having it affect their pensions if they work part-time and things like that.

The point my husband wanted to make is that we are a teaching kitchen. We train staff, but no benefits ever accrue to us. There is no room for our current apprentice at the local technical college because they haven't increased their program to offer more spots. If you can believe it, we have an industry in crisis and they're turning away people who want to enter the cooking program. She has chosen to challenge her exam, knowing that Rémi has had at least five cooks that have challenged, and one received the highest marks in the province. But absolutely nothing accrues back to us as business owners, as we take the time and effort to train these people to help our industry survive and move forward.

I would like to see programs for mentorship, better tax benefits for us as we train these workers—something that acknowledges our work and effort.

I think I have covered everything. I just wanted to state the small operator's opinion. I don't represent everyone, but these are all important issues that need to be considered, and I really do fear for where we're headed.

Thank you.

● (0850)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Cousyn. We appreciate your being here today.

Mr. Hubich.

Mr. Larry Hubich (President, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour): Thank you very much.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here to present before this committee.

The Federation of Labour is a very unique organization in Saskatchewan. We are the largest labour central in the province, with over 90,000 affiliated members. We are the largest industry organization in the province, and we represent more taxpayers than any other single organization in this province.

We have a long history with employability issues. We run a workplace literacy and essential skills program called worker essential skills training, which is WEST for short. It is the longest running labour-sponsored program in Canada—17 years—that deals with literacy and essential skills.

The SFL deals with issues surrounding aboriginal workers, immigrant workers, and apprenticeship. We are a founding partner, along with the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, of the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board. The SLFDB has or will be making a presentation today. I fully endorse their presentation.

It may seem odd to some outsiders, but literacy training, workplace training, essential skills, and other employability issues are natural meeting points for business and labour. There are some rogues out there who will never agree to work with labour, or even other business organizations, but by and large, while we may disagree on tactics surrounding employability issues, we often agree on strategies.

On training, workplace literacy, and essential skills, there isn't enough time in the seven minutes for me to go over the whole range of employability issues. In the few minutes we have, I'd like to talk about workplace literacy and essential skills.

I'm sure I don't have to go over the results of the 2003 adult literacy and life skills survey. I'm also sure I don't have to read to you from the recommendations listed in the report, "Towards a Fully Literate Canada". This report came out last November from the advisory committee on literacy and essential skills to the Minister of Human Resources. Both documents are easily accessible, well researched, and well respected.

Another document you may wish to look at is called "Literacy in Saskatchewan — Implications of Findings from IALSS 2003". This is a PowerPoint presentation that was prepared earlier this year under the auspices of HRSDC.

I have identified about thirteen points, particularly around literacy, that we think are essential in the labour movement. Obviously we reinforce some of the documentation you've received from other organizations, such as our federal counterpart, the Canadian Labour Congress. We support the presentation they made to this committee in October. I've included it in the kit, and I'm sure you have a copy of it.

We need core funding for the Canadian Labour and Business Centre. This centre for research and dialogue on training and other industry issues was the only organization of its kind. It worked well for business and labour, and we would like it back.

The labour market partnership agreement, such as the one Saskatchewan had with the federal government before the current government cancelled it, was a \$109 million agreement. It would have been used to address those issues that this committee is dealing with.

On core funding for the delivery of workplace literacy and essential skills programs, according to Satya Brink, the director of the learning policy directorate at HRSDC, Saskatchewan needs to concentrate on citizens who are at IALS level 2 and bring them up to IALS level 3. The majority of those people are in the workplace. The workplace is the easiest venue for providing literacy and essential skills training. They need to become more productive. As we know, literacy is a transferable skill, so upgrading in the workplace also helps the worker at home and in the community.

I sympathize with the recommendations coming from the previous speaker. Believe me, we're on the same wavelength when it comes to identification and realization of the worker shortage. What we need to do is capture cooperation in a proactive way between business, labour, and government around strategies to stem the tide of people who are attracted to the oil patch. There are some vehicles we need to have in place to ensure that happens.

There is the issue of core funding for provincial, regional, and national literacy networks. These networks were wiped out as of September 25 by the cuts from the federal government, yet they are organizations closest to those who need to access community and family literacy programs.

We think there needs to be core funding for literacy that is focused on apprenticeships and journeypersons. According to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, literacy is one of the key barriers to successfully completing apprenticeship. We need industry-run learning centres and programs that address these needs. We need a pan-Canadian literacy strategy.

●(0855)

We need strong support for our public colleges and technical institutes. These institutions have proven to be the best vehicles for delivery of apprenticeship and other training programs, yet their waiting lists are years long. Again, you referred to that. We need the federal and provincial governments to make a qualitative increase in funding, so these institutions can meet the expanding needs of society and industry alike. We need strong support for union training centres. Many apprentices receive their technical training in union training centres. We think there's room for a 1% training tax fund based on the Quebec model. We need the return of the National Literacy Secretariat. Sectoral employment planning—sector councils are valuable organizations.

On the whole issue of employment and training initiatives for aboriginal people, we're constantly told that aboriginal people are our hidden assets in dealing with the shortage of skilled workers. This can be true, but first we have to give real meaning to those statements and not just turn them into platitudes. As an example, there's little doubt that over the next five to seven years, Saskatchewan's tar sands will start to be developed just like Alberta's. The demand for skilled labour in this and other skill-starved sectors as well as other occupations could be filled by aboriginal people, but only if we start working on this now. We need a massive increase in financially supported academic and apprenticeship training opportunities for aboriginal people, and we need to start that now.

We call on the government to rescind the cuts to the Status of Women budget.

Finally, in closing, I'd like to say we support the written submission of the Canadian Labour Congress. We support the submission I hope you're going to be seeing from the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, which talks about the need to have industry, business, labour, and government participating together in a cooperative effort to deal with a number of these very pressing issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

We will now move through with seven minutes. I'll just remind you that as we go through our first round, Ms. Cousyn has to leave within the half hour. You'll be able to get one round of questioning anyway, so that will be great.

Mr. Regan, seven minutes.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank each of you witnesses for coming in and taking your time to think about these difficult issues. I'm sure you're thinking about them all the time, especially Ms. Cousyn, as you explained, but for all of you, these issues are top of mind, and your knowledge is appreciated.

Let me ask Ms. Gunia a question. What we've been hearing across the country, and you understand this, is the idea of removing the requirement for mandatory retirement. The second suggestion has been that we provide systems whereby seniors can keep some portion of their pension. For instance, if they have old age security or

what have you, they'd be able to keep either part or all of that and still work, so there's an incentive and they'll do a little better. You're saying we need to provide seniors with a good enough income to start with, so they don't need to work.

Are you concerned that if we lift or remove the age of mandatory retirement, it gradually creates the expectation that you ought to be working if you're able-bodied and over 65?

●(0900)

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Yes, that's what I feel. Sweden has an age of 67. I don't want to see that happen here.

Hon. Geoff Regan: You feel it would add pressure—

Ms. Trudi Gunia: If you start depending on an aging workforce, you're going to run into health problems, and then you're no further ahead. It's got to be the younger workforce, but the training isn't there, and it should be, because that's who you're going to look to for employment.

I've been working since I was 16, and it will be 50 years or more that I've worked. I worked hard as a child and I don't want to work beyond 65. At the same time, I live far below the poverty level, so the necessity is there for me. I have a myriad of health problems, so I just don't see how I could do it or want to do it.

Hon. Geoff Regan: By the way, I want to thank you because you've done a lot of research for us, and that's very useful. Thank you.

Let me ask Ms. Cousyn a question. You talked about the difficulty you've had when you tried to get people with disabilities to work, but you find they don't have enough support. Could you talk about the kinds of supports you feel are needed?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: They offer to send in a job coach and things like that, but a restaurant is a very particular place. Unless you've spent time in a restaurant... You can't easily bring in a job coach, and there's often not room for it.

In certain roles in restaurants there is a real place for people with disabilities. For example, when you discuss things such as increasing immigration, you're thinking that these people are going to come in and fill these lower-level entry-level positions that the young people in Canada don't want to do, such as washing dishes.

Nobody can run a restaurant without a dishwasher; that's the reality of it. Our young Canadians don't really want to do this job, so we begin thinking we should fill it with immigrants. But with the right training and the right program, people with some disabilities would be relatively capable of doing this job. We've had some success with that. Our kitchen is particular, because it's small, and dishwashers do a lot of other things, but in certain restaurants I can see that as being highly successful.

You really have to work hard to find a disabled worker. It shouldn't be that hard. The organizations who are trying to integrate these people into the workforce should be knocking on your door saying, I have somebody I think would fit your organization. It shouldn't be the other way around.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Can you describe for us what you have seen in terms of the EI program not working, using the experiences you've had with employees, and give us a little more of an idea of what you have in mind?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: I find in general there's a lack of incentive for people to change jobs and change roles. We've seen success stories. For example, my key dishwasher was on social assistance for nine years. She had two foster children, and she has a third she's raising on her own who has a myriad of disabilities, in terms of social issues at school and what not. She's incredible, but nine years not in the workforce.... It took a sensitive employer like us to say, let's work with this.

You have to support their situation. It shouldn't be to her detriment to re-enter the workforce. It frustrates me to no end. She's still in subsidized housing, when she has a good job. There is a need for programs that can move her forward and get her out of there, but at the same time we as a small business can only pay what the job is worth. No matter how much we care for her and support her in other ways, a dishwasher's wage is a dishwasher's wage.

If there were a top-up system, rather than saying that as soon as you get into the workforce we're clawing back, and you don't get this and you don't get that, if we were saying, enter the workforce and we'll still give you your subsidy.... Every single time she looks at getting out on her own, she says, well, they're going to take away my this and my that.

I just think we have it wrong. This is somebody who is a dedicated worker. She shows up every single day, five days a week, and she shouldn't be in that situation.

• (0905)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Regan, for that round.

We're going to move next to Mr. Lessard. Anybody who needs translation can put on a headset.

Monsieur Lessard, vous avez sept minutes, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for being here this morning and for providing us with your testimony. What is good this morning, is

that we have both a micro and macro perspective: an individual focusing on personal experience, a business perspective and, of course, the federation of labour. In fact, you've all really complemented each other. The work you've done within your small business, Ms. Gunia, is admirable and I appreciate your contribution.

My question is initially directed to you, Ms. Gunia. Your analysis this morning has provided us with a fairly new and fresh perspective and that is that over reliance on an aging labour force is not a good investment for the future. I understand that it may be a short-term investment in the sense that we would be calling on people who need some additional source of income because their pension is not enough.

In fact, you referred to older workers, especially in the area of manual labour, who are often afflicted with all sorts of health issues.

Have you looked at the whole issue of work adjustment for the 60 to 75-year-old workers? That's the age bracket you referred to. When you get older, of course you don't have the same physical strength and yet, the job remains physically demanding. In a business, for example, even if it's only a matter of moving a door, the physical effort required of an older worker is not the same. Have you thought about this issue?

[English]

Ms. Trudi Gunia: I haven't really, but if you adapt the work, I still have the concern that you're trying to keep that worker in the workforce. If you try to adapt that worker to the workforce in a different line of work, then the government, or whoever is studying this, may look at it and say, "Well, look, he can't do that, or she can't do that job, but we can keep that person in this job, so why do they need a pension?" If they're too disabled to work in one thing but they're doing well in another beyond the age of 65, there's still the possibility of saying, "As long as they do well in that job for the next five years, as they keep working, maybe we could raise the pensionable age or cut back on the pension."

I think the danger is always there. Even that is still depending on the older worker. I think that's what you're saying. They were in a job that was too difficult, but perhaps they could do something in another way, another job that's lighter. That may be something that some people would want to do, but I think there are dangers in that. That's still depending on the older worker.

•(0910)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: So if I am understanding you correctly, the current retirement age, which is 65 in Canada should not be increased. Should one wish to continue working after the age of 65, the individual should be able to choose whether it be for personal or financial reasons. Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Right, because a lot of workers are going to be working who can't afford to quit. They can't afford to leave the workforce. That is where I have a problem, too, because the pensions don't match the cost of living.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you.

I would now like to ask Ms. Cousyn some questions. Your slant on employment insurance is really interesting. Clearly, employment insurance penalizes those that pay into it rather than supporting them. I think that what you have said here today only goes to confirm what we have been told in the past. What it is interesting is the fact that this remark was made by an employer to boot.

You said that we could use employment insurance as leverage to encourage people to turn up to work. So, in the case of a business that cannot pay its employees high wages, it can be added to their salary to make the package more competitive. You have some big businesses nearby.

Have you given any thought to the criteria one would need to meet in order to be eligible for this wage supplement? Would it be based on a business' revenue, on the profitability of the business? Have you thought about this?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: It's difficult to say, but for each business, there is a scale when it comes to qualifications and basic wage. So, when you hire a dishwasher, a head chef or a section manager, there is a sliding pay scale with a minimum and maximum range for each position. When you manage your business, you know how much to set aside for each position in order to remain profitable and keep your doors open. Because that's the bottom line: you have to stay open and remain an employer in the community. If you aren't able to cover your business costs, then you won't remain a viable business; you have a budget. A dishwasher's wage is pretty much set. If the dishwasher has been with you for five years, well then yes, you can increase his or her wage, but there has to be a maximum to this range which you cannot exceed. But when someone starts working again, has to turn up to work every day and get back into the swing of things, then he or she may wish to climb up the ladder within a business and get some vocational training which is appropriate to the business.

What I find frustrating is that there are no programs focusing on what small businesses can do for workers. We transmit our experience on a day-to-day basis, we show all our employees what we've learned throughout our career and in the courses we took at school, and this is never recognized, we never get anything back for it. We're always asked to pay more, but we can't. We do what we can and we know our limits. So, if someone wants to work, learn a new vocation, well there are opportunities for such people. Instead of

having a system which penalizes people when things start going well, we should be helping these people and giving them a leg-up so they enjoy a better quality of life while getting back into the workforce.

•(0915)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lessard.

Ms. Janis Cousyn: That was hard.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Cousyn.

We're going to move now to Mr. Martin for seven minutes, please.

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

Indeed, it's an interesting challenge we have in front of us. We've traditionally been out there trying to create more work and help more people in the workforce, and now we have an economy that seems to be coming at us, that is going to demand more employment, and we're not ready for it, obviously.

We have pools of people we could tap into. We talked about this yesterday in Calgary. A lot of people are eyeing the older generation, and the older generation is saying, "Hang on here, we may not necessarily want to work past 60 or 65. We've done our bit, and we should have good pensions and be able to live in dignity and have a quality of life that doesn't demand that we go back to work. If we want to, so be it, but it should be a top-up."

We have our aboriginal people, the fastest growing sector of our population, but we haven't been able to find a way to make it easy for them. We find that they're overrepresented in the category that we refer to as poor in our country.

We have disabled people, immigrants, and women.

It seems to me that we need to be working together, and the government has a major role, a lead role, to play in this.

My first question is for the Federation of Labour. It seems to me that the kinds of things you've been doing with the Canadian Labour and Business Centre are exactly tailor-made for this—having labour sit down with business to figure out a way to move forward that will see everybody's needs being met, allow the economy to go as it has the potential, but make sure that all the boats rise so that we don't end up, as is actually happening in some parts of Alberta and Calgary, creating more poor than we're helping.

I know the funding for the Canadian Labour and Business Centre was cut in the last month and that agency is now shut down. Talk to me a bit about the impact of that and why it is that actually we should be doing more of that type of thing.

Mr. Larry Hubich: We were supporters of the CLBC, and we're disappointed that it became a victim of cuts. While it's certainly not a perfect organization or structure, it did bring the key players to the table. It was the only remaining organization of its kind in Canada that had a Canadian perspective.

Saskatchewan, coincidentally, is the only province in Canada outside of Quebec that continues to have a labour force development board. In Quebec they have the Quebec labour market commission. In Saskatchewan we have the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, which is twelve years old, and we're currently engaged in a process of reinvestment in that board.

Obviously, with any type of an organization that's cross-sectoral, that brings business, labour, and government to the table, you have to continue to reinvest in making sure it works. We had come to the conclusion over twelve years that it was starting to spin its wheels, so we engaged a task force to take a look at the mandate, the role of the board, and to see if we could reinvigorate it. We came to a conclusion that while we may not agree on everything, at least we're in the room together having these dialogues and discussions. We've decided that we're going to reinvent the board. I think that within the very near future you'll see a new body emerge that will be more focused on training, aboriginal employment development, youth engagement, identification of the needs, and trying to match labour with jobs in the future.

You don't put the players in the room together to have that dialogue if you cannot set aside differences and work on areas where you agree. Then you're constantly at loggerheads and constantly in an adversarial environment, and that doesn't serve anyone. In a modern, sophisticated society, as we have, we need to work together on some of these very difficult issues we're confronted with, not the least of which is this looming labour shortage that both business and labour are dealing with—small, medium, or large, it doesn't matter. We need to identify areas where we can work together.

That's why we're so disappointed that the CLBC became one of the victims of the cuts. They were engaged in something that they were just starting, called the workplace partners panel. They did it in maritime Canada, and it brought business and labour together. They did a second phase in Saskatchewan, which they just finished. They were going to move to Manitoba and do one there, and they became victims of the cuts.

They're industry-driven. They're chaired by co-chairs from business and labour, with the support of government. They may need to be refined, and we may need to take a look at how they're structured and work to make sure they're relevant in dealing with what it is they need to deal with, but to sacrifice them is a mistake, and we think there needs to be a reinvestment by government in that.

• (0920)

Mr. Tony Martin: Is there a way with this organization, particularly the one that's still operating in Saskatchewan, to broaden the tent? I've met over the last two nights with the poverty activist groups, people in the community who are concerned about poverty—as a matter of fact, in Calgary, with the labour council, in partnership with the professional association of social workers, who sponsored the event. Last night it was the national anti-poverty organizations. They see this coming at them and most of them are seeing it more as, “Duck, so it doesn't kill you”, as much as “Here's an opportunity.” So it seems to me that somebody needs to bring those folks into the tent to talk about ways to change that so they actually see it as a good thing that would help them out.

Also, for small business like Ms. Cousyn's here today.... I know that oftentimes when we think of labour and business, it's usually big business and organized labour. There's lots of labour out there that isn't organized, unfortunately. Is there any way to bring into the tent some of the labour that Ms. Cousyn needs, or her organization, so that issue can be addressed as well?

The Chair: Very quickly. That's all the time.

Mr. Larry Hubich: I was looking at your agenda for this afternoon, and, coincidentally, two of the organizations that will be presenting before you are members of the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Saskatchewan branch, Marilyn Braun-Pollon, sits on the existing board, and PIND, the Provincial Interagency Network on Disability. But we've also got on our board racialized Canadians, women, low-income, and so on. In the restructured board, it will be more like the Quebec model, which has seats on that board.... It's a bit higher level. It brings together CEOs representing chamber and other organizations that are most reflective of business. Then there will be spots on that board for what's called “the social economy”. This includes low-income, poverty groups, racialized Canadians and so on. Then there will be a structure established to reach out into those communities, sort of a hub and spoke, to get input around issues that are relevant for that particular sector. So we're going to continue to keep the channels open. At least, that's our hope.

Obviously, you can do that. It's simply that your board at some point becomes unmanageable because it's too large. And that's one of the things that we found with the SLFDB. It was kind of spinning its wheels because it was trying to be all things to all people. As a result, there was an identification that we need to focus it a bit more on labour force development and put mechanisms and vehicles in place to ensure that there's a voice or a vehicle or a conduit into that board for groups that may not have someone sitting at that table. But it's possible.

• (0925)

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Martin, you always get just over time and you get that little zinger in there just before we move on to our next questioner.

Mr. Tony Martin: It's so exciting.

The Chair: Everyone needs to be organized.

Ms. Yelich, seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Without going into too much detail, the focus of literacy has changed somewhat. It's more hands-on. I was looking back at where some investments will be made in this refocusing of our literacy programs. The cuts that were made aren't really cuts. They're really being refocused, and we're cutting to the advocacy groups. So I don't know if that will really affect your group, the Labour Congress, that much. In fact, with the new spending focus it should actually enhance what you want to do, and that's more hands-on. We're talking about enhanced language training, essential skills and workplace literacy, workplace skills initiative, aboriginal elementary and secondary education programs, computers for schools, and adult education skills development. So the money is simply being delivered more at the skills level instead of to advocacy organizations.

I'm not sure if you've really looked into where your cuts will affect your group, but I think perhaps you might be interested to know that there is going to be a lot of money for your focused group, the workplace skills and training.

I was wondering, Ms. Cousyn.... You really speak for probably a lot of varieties of businesses. I don't even know how you could suggest what we could do that works with perhaps a labour group. Is there something you see there that should be...? When you hear their presentations, some of the things they're doing, would you like to be at their table? Are there ways that you think you can try to get...? I found it interesting that you feel there is not enough initiative on the disabled groups, or nobody is there bringing it together. Do you see where this should happen, how this should happen, who should...?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: Changing the mentality of such an adversarial approach from business to labour would be helpful. I don't know if we'll ever quite get there, but big business represents a lot.

In Saskatchewan, the community of entrepreneurs is a community of small businesses. There are a lot of people, and we're so busy running our businesses and trying every day to keep our heads above water that there's not a lot of time to spend at forums like this. In terms of sitting at a table and working out ideas and programs, I'm certainly more than willing, but, again, there are limitations on your time and on your energy. Looking at what we're facing and us filling in on a daily basis, we can't get people in to do the work.

I was just actually reflecting on one of the programs we worked with to bring a disabled worker into our kitchen. I think the program was SEARCHs, and we've worked with them a few times. Eventually, we did need to let this individual go, because they only give a support system to train the person into the position. It got to a point where she was a fantastic little worker and we liked her—she was very pleasant—but she just couldn't keep up with the pace. We needed to have basically one or two other people there with her in order for her to do the job that normally one person could do. The business itself just cannot support that level of cost in order to keep such a disabled worker employed. If there were systems or if that subsidy, for example, were to be continued, she'd likely still be with us.

There are a lot of things like that. The fact that the trade school has a waiting list is beyond ridiculous to me. We don't have people to work in our industry...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*].... They want to get into it.

● (0930)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Did you ever hear from some of those you've lost to Alberta, to the oil sands, in that they would like to come back? [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The new government had announced apprenticeships. Would that help you in the training that you specified? It had to be red-sealed, so I'm not sure if...

Ms. Janis Cousyn: I just don't think it's enough. For the people who are giving their time and their expertise to train the next generation of workers, there are not enough benefits accruing to them. We're doing it because we care about what we do. We love what we do. We love our trade. But financially, the benefits to be replacing.... We're basically our own little trade school in our kitchen, but what are we getting? What is the government giving back to us? Nothing.

We sponsor people to go and challenge the exams. We pay, ourselves, out of our pocket, because we care about it. These workers will stay with us for awhile, but in our trade they need to see other restaurants. They need to move in order to continue to expand. We're not going to have these people in our kitchen forever. That's not the point. But there should be recognition for the people who are doing that.

Five or six or I don't know how many young cooks have challenged the exam from working in our kitchen. You don't get the top...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would just like to mention as well that I thought your presentation was well researched too, Ms. Gunia.

I want to go back to the question I asked about whether you have heard from many of these people who have moved to the oil sands. There's a huge issue with housing out there, and what we're hearing in Alberta as well is that they would like us to provide affordable housing because of what's happening. Then you'd find yourself in even more competition, wouldn't you? I'm hearing that a lot of people prefer to come back to this province because of what you talked about.

Ms. Janis Cousyn: The people we've lost to the oil patch don't want to be there, they want to be here. They want to be bakers, they don't want to be.... They want to do the work they love to do.

These people are there for the money, and they're there for the money only. Our industry cannot compete with that. We can't even attempt to. In Saskatchewan we can't even compete with the wages they're paying at McDonald's in Alberta. Our young people are hitting the road, and that's where they're going. We just are not going to have the bodies to fill the jobs.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Thank you.

The Chair: That concludes our first round. We're going to move to our second round, which will be five minutes of questions and answers.

We realize, Ms. Cousyn, that you may have to leave at some point. We want to thank you for being here today.

Mr. Regan, five minutes, please.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Cousyn, I can tell you that while the problem is probably nowhere more acute than Saskatchewan and perhaps British Columbia, we're hearing about this problem right across the country, including certainly in my province of Nova Scotia.

A few months ago, I talked to a fellow who's an excavator operator and who'd just come back from working six or eight weeks I think in Alberta. He and his wife were considering moving there for the last five working years of his life because he was making three times as much there as he was in Nova Scotia. So it's a problem that is spreading more and more across the country.

I'm sorry Ms. Yelich left, because she was talking about literacy, and I want to move to that for a second. She was saying that they're not actually cutting. Of course, we know that they're spending \$17.7 million less on literacy. The minister said in fact, in the early weeks after the cuts were announced, that they weren't going to be funding advocacy and lobbying, which is how they described the work of the national, regional, and provincial organizations in the literacy area.

However, contrary to what she said—I think she's mistaken about this—last Wednesday there was a conference call from the Department of Human Resources to literacy groups, to the provincial and national and regional organizations, that we're going to let you apply now, and we're going to consider your applications that you put in by September 15, the deadline.

It's not a situation where they're now saying that they're just cutting advocacy or lobbying—if in fact those groups could be properly described as doing advocacy and lobbying only, which they can't, in my view. They are in fact now saying that it's still \$17.7 million cut, but we aren't necessarily cutting people involved in these national and regional groups that are doing this so-called lobbying and advocacy.

I want to ask particularly the Federation of Labour about the kind of literacy work you're doing. My impression is that it's labour-sponsored, so government money is not involved. Or was there money from the national literacy strategy for that?

Other than that, what are you seeing and hearing in the literacy field as a result of these cuts?

• (0935)

Mr. Larry Hubich: We have a number of different literacy initiatives. We get a grant from the provincial government to cover some of them. We have applied, under the auspices of the SLFDB, for money available through the federal government under HRSDC and other grants.

Most of them are workplace-based. Oftentimes they're peer-delivered. In other words, you may have a group of workers out in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, who work in grain handling and transportation. We do workplace training and train the trainers to deliver workplace-based training.

First, with that kind of work, the employer is giving time off; two, the union in many cases is assisting in the training of the workplace peer trainers; and three, the funding is coming through a variety of mechanisms, through direct investment by the employer, investment by the union, or investment by the federal or provincial government. Obviously, when one of those pieces falls off, or one of those partnership funding arrangements falls off, then the others are left to pick up the slack, or else the training initiative becomes vulnerable to no longer existing since it doesn't have in place the necessary funding to make that occur.

We do believe the loss of \$17.7 million in literacy-based training will have an impact on initiatives in Saskatchewan. I'm not the expert in this field; we have people at the federation who are dedicated solely and exclusively to workplace essential skills training and literacy. We haven't yet seen what is being proposed to replace it. Obviously we'll pursue that.

So we do see significant cuts. If there are pieces in place that replace that adequately, we're not aware of those. Perhaps we need to do some....

Hon. Geoff Regan: Early on it seemed that there was at least some degree of clarity in understanding where these cuts were focused. I'm not sure there would be enough going to all those regional and national groups to cover that whole amount, \$17.7 million, so they had to go beyond that, in my view. However, now they're saying, in fact, to those groups: yes, we've changed our position on this; we're going to let you fly and will consider your stuff. Really it's not clear at all now where that \$17.7 million is being cut, and it sounds as if it's everywhere. It could be anywhere within the literacy system, and that's very worrisome.

But let me ask you....

My time is up already? Five minutes goes quickly.

The Chair: Yes, thank you.

Monsieur Lessard, vous avez cinq minutes, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When it comes to literacy, we need to be clear. I think that our friend Ms. Yelich from the Conservative Party, gave us an accurate account of what is being targeted. It's true that organizations are being targeted, and not programs, but at the end of the day, that's tantamount to targeting every program.

Who puts these programs together? Who submits these projects to government? The organizations do. Who supports these projects? The organizations do. Who brings these projects to fruition? The organizations do. What's being targeted? Savings far in excess of \$17 million is what is being targeted: they want to put an end to these programs.

An analogy may be made with the restaurant industry. When you announce you're going to make staff cutbacks, and maintain that your food will be just as good because you'll continue to buy good products, well if you have no one to put together the menu, if you have no one left to prepare a service project or to recruit staff, your clientele will run a mile. It's exactly the same, in my opinion.

Fortunately, Aboriginal groups often come back to this issue. And I think that it's time we made it our business to seek out this segment of the labour force. Would I be making an accurate appraisal of the situation were I to say that these workers should be adequately prepared before they arrive on the labour market? This is a segment of the labour force which has been sidelined and which, in my opinion, doesn't have the same work culture as White people. They have a work culture, but it's not the same. So don't you think a program should be developed in order to prepare Aboriginal workers for the labour market, and its various sectors?

• (0940)

Ms. Janis Cousyn: Absolutely. This is something we need to do in Saskatchewan. I think that we need to work with the leaders of this community so they also realize this is important for the future and that getting their community members into the workforce is problematic. At the same time, it's clear there is a major discrepancy between how healthy their community members are in Saskatchewan when compared to the health of those people living in more affluent communities. We need to start preparing these people; they're the ones who will help us, in our industry.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Indeed, there's a substantial human resource available there. I agree.

I would like to direct my next question to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and you can add to their answer, if you so desire.

The current economic boom in Alberta is largely thanks to the oil industry. We know that there are many workers who have left Saskatchewan for Alberta. Has the federation analyzed the future impact of its boom as far as the price of gas is concerned?

Let me make myself clear. I think that analysts have said that should the price of a barrel of oil sold below the \$60 mark for any length of time, Alberta would be in trouble. Fortunately, Alberta is currently reaping the rewards of this boom because the price of a barrel of oil remains well above the \$60 mark. Have you looked at the impact this situation may have from a labour force standpoint in the future? That couldn't be sustained.

[English]

Mr. Larry Hubich: No, we haven't done any analysis on the hollowing out of the economy relative to the price of oil. That's certainly not my expertise, and we haven't done any significant analysis of that, but I do think the Alberta economy is being somewhat hollowed out by the high price of oil and the dedication of resources to that sector only.

I just want to comment very briefly on aboriginal employment.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: So you are aware that that has a direct impact on employability, access to employment and keeping people at work.

[English]

Mr. Larry Hubich: Yes.

On the issue of aboriginal engagement in the workforce and aboriginal training, in Saskatchewan we have two unique institutions: the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the First Nations University of Canada.

We see representatives from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan as being integral and key players in the dialogue around making the connections between labour market information and having them at the table as full participants in aboriginal employment development, education and training needs, identification of the work that needs to be done, and accessing that pool of labour, but have them properly trained either through existing regional colleges in Saskatchewan—SIAST, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, the Alberta equivalent of which is SAIT or NAIT—and elsewhere, the regional college structure, and our own unique aboriginal institutions of education, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the First Nations University of Canada.

The capacity is there. We just need to do a better job of identification of the jobs of the future and the workforce of the future and match those two with appropriate education, training, and then placement opportunities, working with business, small and large, with labour, with government, with aboriginal government, and with educational institutions.

• (0945)

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

We're going to move to Mr. Martin for five minutes, please.

Mr. Tony Martin: I just want to again say, in terms of the fear that was raised in the Canada Pension Plan and whether it will last, I've been to some meetings, particularly with the Canadian Labour Congress, looking at the Canada Pension Plan. Studies have been done, and the actuaries have come back to say it's a sound program and it will fund itself moving forward, and we shouldn't be spooked by the Fraser Institute or the C.D. Howe Institute into somehow dismantling that or scaring seniors into going back to work because they might not have a pension. I think we have to be more thoughtful about that.

The other thing is employment insurance. Ms. Cousyn has mentioned that perhaps we could use that to help small business by making it more flexible. Again, it's a fund that has been changed radically over the last few years, not because there isn't enough money. We're now, in the calculations that have been made, running in that fund a surplus of over \$45 billion that we're not using. Why isn't it being used somewhere?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: Those overpayments—

Mr. Tony Martin: Why couldn't we use that money more creatively to help people like yourself and small business?

I want to be the first one today to talk a little bit about Ireland. We heard about it two or three times yesterday, and we may have to go there yet, although we'd probably have to get the government to agree to fund it.

In Ireland, as they looked ahead in the seventies to the possibility of growing an economy and involving everybody, they began to do five-year plans, where they brought everybody around the table. It was huge. The government was there with the resources to support it: organized labour, big business, small business, community groups—everybody. I was in the room, in Dublin, where they did these.

They came up with five-plans. The last one was a plan called a Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. In it, they asked the regions to identify absolutely every organization, small business, and individual in that region needing to be helped to participate. Then they went about doing that, because if they didn't do it and make a plan for everybody—every small business, every individual, every opportunity that was there—they wouldn't get the funding from the central government.

It seems strange to me that at a time when we're looking at the possibility of a really exciting economy that could and should include lots of people—small business, individuals, particularly the poor out there who've been waiting a long time for their chance to participate.... We've just cut \$152 million out of the lead ministry; Human Resources and Social Development has lost \$152 million.

In your experience so far with what's going on, Ms. Cousyn, you're saying people are leaving Saskatchewan and are heading for Alberta. We were in Alberta, in Calgary, and were being told that it isn't all a land of milk and honey out there, that the cost of living is extraordinary, and that there's lots of homelessness now, more than they've seen in a long time.

You've mentioned some, and perhaps the labour federation could also add to these, but what role do you see government playing in this, given what other jurisdictions have done?

Ms. Janis Cousyn: Let me just go back to the aboriginal community and the resource that is there. If we can somehow integrate that community into the workforce better, partnering with them in whatever programs, I think it's Saskatchewan's only hope, frankly. The issue, though, is that there are cultural differences there. We have to do this very sensitively. It's not going to be an easy road.

How can I explain this?

I have to clear my head. I'm not following through on my thought here; it was there and then it's gone. I'm sorry.

• (0950)

Mr. Tony Martin: Maybe the federation will want to take a run at it.

Mr. Larry Hubich: I think government plays a key role in facilitating dialogue. When I meet with my chamber of commerce counterpart at the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, we'll acknowledge going into the room that we're not going to agree on all of these things, but at least we can agree on three things. Let's not spend all our time diverted into dealing with issues we don't agree on; let's spend our time dealing with issues we do agree on.

Government can play a role in facilitating that: bringing those partners together, putting in the seed funding to allow it to happen, creating boards and commissions, and working with business and labour on industry-focused things that we agree on. They can play a role there.

On the whole EI thing, part of the reason there's a huge surplus isn't that it's being overcontributed to; it's that in Saskatchewan only 17% of the people who pay into it are eligible to receive. There's a real disconnect between paying into that fund and having some eligibility to get into it. We need to fix that side of it.

Ms. Janis Cousyn: I'm sorry, I remembered what my thought was.

It's that I hope we can begin to work better with the resource of the aboriginal community so that our industry, the restaurant and tourism industry—the hospitality industry in general—is not left behind. In general, our industry is not ever perceived as a serious place for workers. It's always seen as a temporary, in-between kind of thing. The focus is always on big business.

I just hope our industry is not forgotten in this. There's a place for the aboriginal workforce in our industry, and I hope there will be programs at the Indian Federated College and at the university level, the aboriginal university, that are directly for the trade, the hospitality industry, either front of the house or back of the house.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Could I just add something?

The Chair: Sure, go ahead, Ms. Gunia.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: You were talking about the Canada Pension Plan, but I wasn't particularly concerned with a lot of the studies that they're coming out with. It was the health care. They keep talking about this huge cost of health care as though it's the seniors who are to blame, so we perhaps should keep them in the workforce to make them pay for that. That's a very worrisome thing.

Mr. Tony Martin: And it will make them sicker. Ms. Yelich isn't here, but we hear every day in Ottawa these days that the government is awash in surpluses, in billions of dollars of surplus. So I don't know. There's a bit of a disconnect there too.

Dean's going to cut me off here.

The Chair: No. I think part of what we're hearing, Ms. Gunia, is that seniors want the opportunity not to be forced into retirement. They want the opportunity to be able to work longer should they choose, and it's really a matter of choice.

I think your point is well taken, that we should never look at trying to now extend when you can receive pension benefits and all these other things. I think your concern is probably with the slippery slope, and that there should be a way that seniors can earn more money without having clawbacks. You talked about clawbacks. It's a very real issue, and it's an issue in the service industry and every industry, whether you're on a fixed pension or you're on a fixed income, OAS or GIS, or any of these other things. As soon as you work 10, 15, 20 hours, almost every dollar is clawed back dollar for dollar, and I think that's very unacceptable. It's a disincentive to work, and I think that's a challenge.

So what we've heard loud and clear is that seniors should have the opportunity, should they choose, to work, and we're not talking about changing the age....

●(0955)

Ms. Trudi Gunia: I'm not really concerned with raising it or lowering it. I could never think about retiring at the age of 50 or 55, but certainly I don't want the age raised up from 65. But it's not only about choosing to work. There are many who are forced to work.

The Chair: And certainly that ties into what we've heard in terms of clawbacks, in terms of the inability to have enough pension income or some of those other things that are available.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Taxes are another problem. When you're earning only \$11,000 or \$12,000 a year, it's very difficult to pay taxes. The tax rate is fairly high, and I think there should be some kind of a ceiling.

I know at one time that was suggested by the NDP. Mr. Layton suggested that those earning \$16,000 and under shouldn't be paying taxes. I didn't hear any more about it, but there should be some level. I don't know what the poverty level is right now, \$21,000 or \$18,000?

The Chair: It varies by region and area, for sure.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Yes, so if you're living that far below the poverty level, how are you expected to be paying all these taxes?

The Chair: There's no question about it. I believe, and I think this whole committee believes, that seniors have certainly paid their fair share, and they do continue to pay probably more than they should. I think we all agree on that. I don't think we always agree on the solution, but we certainly agree that seniors have paid their way. They helped build this country, and quite frankly, in their elder years there needs to be more support from government to help sustain them.

Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: There is some good news, which is that with baby boomers retiring, there will be more seniors, and seniors tend to vote in greater proportions than other people do. I think with more and more voters being seniors, they're going to have more and more clout.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Let's hope so.

The Chair: Ms. Yelich, do you have a final comment before we wrap up?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I want to make a comment. I was just looking at my notes, and when you talk about aboriginal elementary and secondary education, Indian Affairs and Northern Development put \$2.6 billion over two years into particularly targeting that. I just wanted to mention that, because I think we have to know there is a lot of emphasis on aboriginal training for both elementary and secondary. I'm hearing today some of the comments about how important it is. I do realize how important it is.

I think we have to know that the government is looking very seriously at how we can make sure that group is targeted, especially in Saskatchewan, and considering all the sensitivities that Janis had alerted us to. It is a huge issue, and we're hoping to address it.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Can I just ask for a clarification? I'm a little confused.

You said \$2.6 billion over two years, targeting aboriginal training. You said both elementary and secondary. Do you mean training and elementary and secondary?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I meant secondary education programs. I'm talking about aboriginal elementary and secondary education programs. The training we offer to aboriginals comes under programs under HRDC. I'm just saying that in our department we have moneys, but we're talking about literacy. And there's money that's been cut, and aboriginals are unfairly—

Hon. Geoff Regan: Yes, but the \$2.6 billion, I presume is for... I mean, the point is that the Government of Canada is responsible for the school system on reserves, right?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes.

Hon. Geoff Regan: And that's the elementary and secondary system.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I just want to put on record that it isn't that—

Hon. Geoff Regan: Am I right that the \$2.6 billion is mostly for that? I don't know on that—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: The \$2.6 billion is for—

Hon. Geoff Regan: It's for that.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes, and it's exactly that. That is clarified there.

I want people to not misunderstand that the government does not recognize that the aboriginal communities are getting funding for their elementary, their education, their post-secondary education, but also we are offering training. On the literacy cuts that we're continually talking about, it sounds like we are not giving any money towards education at all towards aboriginals. I'm finding that there's a lot of misunderstanding about the education of aboriginals.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I don't think anyone is saying that the government has cut the funding for schools on reserves, but there certainly remains in literacy—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Well, secondary education, though—

Hon. Geoff Regan: They will affect people off reserves at least and the various training for people under literacy. We'll have to wait and see where all that—

●(1000)

The Chair: We're in debate now, I believe.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'm sorry, this is a debate. I'm trying to understand what—

The Chair: It was for clarification.

I just want to take this opportunity—

Ms. Trudi Gunia: I just have a question for Lynne.

On funding for aboriginal youth off reserve, though, there is no funding, is there, for school or for—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: No, but for post-secondary there is, from the federal government.

Ms. Trudi Gunia: Okay.

I have a granddaughter who is part aboriginal, and we have checked into it and she's not qualified.

The Chair: Maybe you two could have that conversation after the fact.

I do want to thank all the groups for being here today to make their presentations. We realize this is a huge issue across the country, so we appreciate your different viewpoints as we try to formulate

some recommendations to the government to help them with this huge crisis.

Once again, thanks for taking the time to be here today. It is certainly greatly appreciated.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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