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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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•(1540)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, October 25, 2006, Bill C-257, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code on replacement workers, we'll now continue to hear our witnesses.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to start with the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce because they have some time restrictions on their end and wanted to make their submission.

Because we have three of you via teleconference, I will identify who I'd like to speak next. We're going to go with seven minutes of opening statements. I will indicate when you've got one minute left, so you don't have to look at your own stopwatch. We will proceed with a couple of rounds of questions—a seven-minute round, followed by a five-minute round.

Typically we'll have the MPs address the question. They may want to address the Hamilton chamber or the Winnipeg chamber. If you'd like to make a comment and there's some time, you can just identify yourselves as the Hamilton chamber, for example, and then the teleconference experts will make sure they put the camera on the appropriate chamber.

We'll get started with the testimony. I have some announcements, but since we don't have all our members here yet, I'll save that until after we've had a chance to hear from the opening witnesses before we start our rounds of questioning. By that time, hopefully, we'll have all our members.

I would like to welcome the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce. I believe we have Mr. Douglas Coles and Ms. Kathryn Coll.

Please go ahead, Mr. Coles, for seven minutes.

Mr. Douglas Coles (Second Vice-Président, Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce): Thank you very much.

The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization made up of business and professional people sharing a common goal: the economic development of the greater Charlottetown area. With over 740 members, the chamber represents a diverse network of small, medium-sized, and large businesses from almost every industry sector and business profession. Because Charlottetown is home to the headquarters of Veterans Affairs

Canada and is a provincial capital, there are a number of federal public sector employers in our community with whom our local businesses have a vital business relationship.

It is the chamber's position that significant changes to the labour act, such as the prohibition of the use of replacement workers, fundamentally alters the basic premise for labour-management relations and potentially threatens the continuity of essential services provided by critical infrastructure workers. Such a change should not be made without a thorough understanding of what gap in the existing labour relations structure the amendment purports to resolve and a careful examination of the consequences to ensure that the overall result of the change will be beneficial.

Legislative changes that have the potential to destabilize federal labour-management relations may have serious repercussions for our members. Our members are very vulnerable to labour instability for the following reasons.

Many of our members are small to medium-sized businesses with limited capacity to absorb losses or delays arising from labour instability within federally regulated organizations, customers, or suppliers.

Because of the size of our province, chamber members are highly dependent upon the interprovincial transportation system for importing supplies and exporting product. Any labour instability related to federally regulated transportation will have a significant impact on our members' ability to conduct business.

The balance of power in labour-management relations is already shifting as the labour supply tightens and it becomes a sellers' market.

It is the chamber's position that significant changes to the labour act, such as the prohibition of the use of replacement workers, fundamentally alters the basic premise for labour-management relations. Again, any change cannot be made without a thorough understanding of what the amendment purports to resolve.

Legislative bans on permanent replacement workers exist in most jurisdictions in Canada. This means that striking workers have the right to their job once the strike is over. They cannot be permanently replaced by replacement workers who may have been temporarily hired during the strike.

The more stringent ban on the use of temporary replacement workers has been in place in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993, and in Ontario between 1993 and 1995. The chamber suggests that consideration of the labour relations climate in these provinces would indicate that such bans on even temporary replacement workers can have a polarizing effect on collective bargaining and a serious impact on the economy.

The chamber does not believe that Bill C-257 remedies any existing weakness in the labour relations framework in Canada. Indeed, the chamber is at a loss to understand what benefits would result from the passing of the legislation. Is there evidence that replacement worker legislation reduces the number of work stoppages? Is there evidence that replacement worker legislation reduces the duration of work stoppages? Is there evidence that Canadian workers are being paid unfairly by employers?

In the 1990s, the Canada Labour Code underwent a careful review, involving thorough consultation with stakeholders, resulting in several important changes to the code, including a recourse for the unions that believe employers are abusing the use of replacement workers in order to undermine the union. Furthermore, the amendments provided protection for striking workers to be reinstated ahead of any replacement workers.

The chamber submits that there is no ostensible failing in the existing legislation that requires such a drastic change, and there has also not been sufficient study and consultation with the affected parties to fully appreciate how such a prohibition would affect all stakeholders.

Bill C-257 would create a distortion in the balance of negotiating power between employers and unions. While striking employees have the right to find work elsewhere, employers do not have the right to seek other workers. If the option to use replacement workers is removed from the labour relations model, the options for the employer would become more extreme: to have to accept the union's position; to face a complete shutdown of operations for the duration of the strike; or to go to government and seek back-to-work orders and binding arbitration.

•(1545)

The use of replacement workers does not undermine the power of unions in strike situations. Given the increasing difficulty in recruiting workers in even the best working conditions, finding workers who are capable and competent to perform the work and who are willing to face the negative messaging and ill will that is targeted at replacement workers is a significant challenge. Employers do not readily opt for this approach, if there is any possibility of negotiating a deal with the unions.

Bill C-257 is more drastic than existing comparable legislation in British Columbia, because it denies employees the right to cross picket lines. Furthermore, it makes no provision for essential services. Hence, strikes involving critical infrastructure workers could bring entire service sectors across Canada to a grinding halt.

In conclusion, Bill C-257 is an echo of legislation in place in the province of Quebec that has had negative effects on both labour relations and the economy in that province.

Bill C-257 is a proposal that lacks a clear purpose and a balanced benefit. The bill has proceeded to this point of review without due consultation of its potential impact on the labour relations framework in Canada. Our chamber urges the committee to recommend against the passage of Bill C-257.

This is respectfully submitted by John Gaudet, president of Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coles.

Ms. Coll, how do you pronounce your name?

Ms. Kathryn Coll (Chair, Human Resource Development Committee, Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce): "Call".

The Chair: "Call". Thank you very much.

I know you won't be able to answer any questions as we go through the rest of it, but I want to thank you for making your submission. We understand that you'll have to check out in about another 15 minutes.

We'll go through the rest of the presentations, and once again, thank you for taking the time to be with us via teleconference today.

Mr. Douglas Coles: Thank you.

The Chair: We will move back across to Mr. Secord, as well as to Mr. Anderson, from the United Transportation Union.

Once again, gentlemen, thank you for being here today. You have seven minutes as well, if you'd like to start.

Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Tim Secord (Canadian Legislative Director, United Transportation Union): Thank you, Chair.

The United Transportation Union is an international trade union with over 125,000 members throughout Canada and the United States. We represent employees in the railway, bus, and airline industries, with a preponderance of our membership working in federal jurisdiction in Canada. Our members contribute heavily to the economic and social fabric of Canadian society at every level and in almost every community. Our members work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, in one of the most dangerous and demanding industries in Canada.

Currently, we're in contract negotiations with CN Rail with a strike and lockout deadline of February 9, 2007, looming before us. The committee should be aware that in accordance with the provisions of part 1 of the code, we sought a maintenance of activities agreement with CN; however, CN determined that no such agreement was necessary. In addition to the written text of this brief, the committee should also be aware that we've twice reached out to CN rail for a maintenance of activities agreement to deal with the issue of commuter transit in Toronto and Montreal, and still today there has been no response from CN.

We're pleased to have the opportunity to address the committee on this most important issue. We believe Bill C-257 can improve part 1 of the code by building a measure of fairness into it that currently does not exist. We believe this bill to be in the public interest and in the interest of fairness between workplace parties as a whole.

Labour law in Canada has long recognized the right to strike. This right provides a union its strongest opportunity for economic sanction to be leveraged on an employer through collective withdrawal of their services by its members to support its position in collective bargaining. The right to fair and free collective bargaining has been a fundamental right within our society for a very long time and is consistent with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998. This right to strike is fundamental to the Canada Labour Code and is but one of the many rights and obligations that govern labour relations in the federal sector.

The code acts as the vehicle by which both workplace parties, through their collective agreement relationship, can assure labour peace and measurable costs and benefits for a specific amount of time. The requirements related to the duty of fair representation and the grievance and arbitration process make sure workplace differences are resolved. The only opportunity a union has to bring economic pressure to bear on the employer is through the bargaining process, by exercising their right to strike at the expiration of an agreement; this committee knows full well that only 3% of collective agreement disputes ever get to the point of a strike or lockout situation.

Economically speaking, the balance of power between an employer and a union at the beginning of a strike is influenced by things both are entitled to consider. The union has to decide whether it will withdraw its services by engaging in a strike, while the employer must decide if they should hang onto positions that might result in a strike. Both parties begin a process whereby they determine, on the one hand, their ability to withstand a strike, and on the other hand, their acceptance of economic pressure through a strike.

The right to strike, as with all aspects of a union's functions, is set out carefully in the code. It is this process that provides a balance between the rights and obligations of the workplace parties in their relationship.

Replacement workers, not being a part of the bargaining unit, are strangers to that bargaining relationship. They have no level of participation in the collective bargaining process, nor do they have a community of interest with the employer. Replacement workers do not vote in the democratic process that seeks a strike mandate, and bringing replacement workers into the workplace interferes with the balance of power that the workplace parties have established and measured at the beginning of a strike. Research has shown linkages between the introduction of replacement workers and numerous negative effects. These negative effects include greater picket-line violence and unnecessarily prolonged strike action.

When replacement workers are brought into a strike situation, they normally come into direct contact with picketers and other union members who may also support the strike. This type of contact is counterproductive, inflammatory, and disruptive. Picketers view

replacement workers with contempt, because they are aliens to the historical relationship between the employer and the striking employees. The replacement workers are seen as a means to dilute the economic pressure being placed on the strike-bound employer.

• (1550)

Such circumstances and the emotions involved become a recipe for escalating picket line incidents and increased vigilance, if and when violence should unfortunately occur.

It's in no one's interest to see violence occur at any time; however, there are a few examples when an unscrupulous employer has relied on this type of provocation to intimidate striking workers. Violence on picket lines can only poison relationships for years to come, in the workplace and in the community.

The effects of these poisoned relationships remain long after the strike is ended. If a picketer engages in criminal conduct, he or she is disciplined for it. That discipline is then handled under the collective bargaining agreement, and it has a tendency to delay the duration and the resolution of strikes.

Additionally, when all is considered together, these dynamics are harmful and will likely damage and/or interfere in the re-establishment of the bargaining relationship over the term of the next agreement.

Members of this committee understand the obligations and responsibilities that unions have under the code, and we're equally confident you are also aware of the employer's obligations and rights under the code. In the interests of time, we won't reiterate them here.

Suffice it to say that there are ample checks and balances built into the code, including numerous prohibitive clauses. Without getting into the morass of statistics, we believe the issue that needs to be looked at is what labour relations are like when replacement workers are used and what they're like when they aren't.

If one believes there's a balance of power under the code during a strike when replacement workers are allowed, then how is that balance maintained when an employer locks out its employees?

With that, Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time I'll close and thank the members of the committee for their time, and certainly the members of Parliament who saw this bill through to this level—and beyond, I'm sure.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Secord and Mr. Anderson.

I'm going to move to teleconference now, with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

Would you make sure your microphones are on mute; we can hear some sirens in the background. When you start speaking, you can unmute your microphone. That would be great.

We're going to go to the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. We have Mr. Falco and Mr. Tufts. Welcome, Hamilton. You have seven minutes, please.

• (1555)

Mr. Len Falco (President, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Len Falco, and as president of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce I would like to thank the chair and honourable members of this committee for allowing us the opportunity to appear today.

I am also speaking as the owner and operator of a full-service recruiting and staffing company that specializes in general staffing and human resources consulting.

My co-presenter this afternoon is Mr. Bill Tufts, who is the chair of our human resources committee at the Hamilton chamber. The human resources committee monitors employment, labour, and workplace legislation.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce is one of Canada's most active local chambers, acting as Hamilton's recognized voice of business continually since 1845. We are in fact the oldest, largest, and most broadly based organization extant in the broader Golden Horseshoe, outside of the GTA.

Today we are comprised of over 1,900 individual members who represent 1,150 businesses and organizations of all sizes and sectors that collectively employ 75,000 people full time, in all parts of the city, and indeed many beyond our municipal boundaries.

It is essential to state that our broader membership also includes not-for-profit organizations and unionized corporations. In fact, we were one of the first chambers to actively embrace unions and welcome them to the city of Hamilton.

Hamilton is an important central transportation and distribution hub for road, air, marine, and rail. If Bill C-257 is passed, it would have an immense negative impact on Hamilton's economy and our industries, an effect that will be replicated all across Canada, from sea to sea to sea.

Additionally, we show complete support to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce regarding their views of Bill C-257.

The city of Hamilton has a superb transportation network, which is located at the centre of the Golden Horseshoe's industrial corridor. It has direct access to Toronto and points eastward as well as to the United States via Detroit or Buffalo along Highways 401 and 403 and the Queen Elizabeth Way.

The port of Hamilton handles over 12 million tonnes of cargo and is visited by over 700 vessels each year. This ranks Hamilton as the busiest of all Canadian Great Lakes ports.

A 2001 Stamm study determined that almost 4% of Ontario's GDP and 30% of the greater Hamilton region's GDP is directly or indirectly connected to the operations centred on the port of Hamilton. This translates into an employment equivalent, considering both indirect and direct impacts, of approximately 220,000 jobs.

Since privatization, Hamilton International Airport's airport-related workforce has grown from 726 to more than 1,300 full-time equivalent employees. Under TradePort management, passenger traffic at the Hamilton terminal has increased from 90,000 in 1996 to approximately 900,000 in 2002 and growing. Air cargo has increased by 50% since 1996. In 2002, 91,000 metric tonnes of cargo passed through the airport.

CN's Hamilton Metals Distribution Centre is located in the heart of Canada's largest steel-consuming market. The facility is home to Canada's steel manufacturing, distribution, and processing industry, and is located in one of North America's largest vehicle production areas. Furthermore, CN's Hamilton MDC is strategically positioned to do business in the largest Canada-U.S. steel corridor.

Proposed subsection 94(2.4) of Bill C-257 states:

The measures referred to in subsection (2.2) shall exclusively be conservation measures and not measures to allow the continuation of the production of goods or services otherwise prohibited by subsection (2.1).

This provision contained in Bill C-257 will have the following impact on the health and well-being of Canadians.

First, it will undermine the dependability of Canada's infrastructure industries. Continuity of service in the federally regulated infrastructure industries is important to virtually all Canadian enterprises, not just those under federal jurisdiction.

For example, if a work stoppage took place in the transportation network, with services halted, ports closed, and so on, it would be felt by all Canadians and Canada's trading partners who rely on an uninterrupted flow of goods. Most federal businesses are providers of services where the ability to stockpile goods does not exist.

• (1600)

Secondly, it would detract from Canada's attractiveness as a place in which to invest. In an era of global mobility of investment, potential investors to Canada would also negatively perceive such a provision.

Bill.

Mr. Bill Tufts (Chair, Human Resources Committee, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce): Good afternoon.

It is well understood that federally regulated industries, such as transportation, telecommunications, and financial services, provide services essential to Canadians and Canadian business, as they constitute the framework of a well-functioning Canadian society and economy. Federally regulated companies are service providers to all Canadians and bear the responsibility of ensuring that goods, services, capital, and people flow freely across the country and across borders.

Whenever there is a work stoppage involving a federal sector employee, two outcomes generally occur. First, the work stoppage causes considerable national economic disruption. The shutdown of a federal employer—an airline, trucking company, broadcaster, or postal service—has wide-ranging consequences for Canadian society and businesses, which depend on the uninterrupted provision of such services.

The Chair: There's one minute left.

Mr. Bill Tufts: Thank you.

Further, in some cases the federal employer is often the only entity that provides the services, with no alternative replacement available. This may lead to the second impact. Parliament passes back-to-work legislation shortly after the commencement of the work stoppage, as a disruption of such services cannot be tolerated for any prolonged period.

In conclusion, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce shows their complete support for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce regarding Bill C-257 and reiterates the following: there is no evidence that enacting Bill C-257 will result in reduced work stoppages and durations; there is credible data provided by the federal government that refutes the false assumption that enacting Bill C-257 will bring fewer and shorter work stoppages.

We currently have a fair and balanced system, developed through consultation with both business and labour, that respects the interests of both employers and employees in dealing with work stoppages. In the opinion of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Bill C-257 will disrupt the balance we currently have in place. Don't change it just to benefit one party, to the detriment of society as a whole.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen from the Hamilton chamber, Mr. Falco as well as Mr. Tufts.

We're now going to move to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, and I believe we have with us Mr. Angus and Mr. Gardner. You have seven minutes, gentlemen.

Mr. David Angus (President and Chief Executive Officer, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, on behalf of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, which represents over 1,800 companies and is the largest business association in Winnipeg, made up of small, medium, and large businesses representing all different sectors of business, thank you very much for the opportunity to present to the committee today on this important piece of legislation.

Joining me today as the individual doing our presentation is Bill Gardner. Bill is a partner with Pitblado LLP, a prominent law firm here in Winnipeg. He's also the chair of the Manitoba Employers Council, which is a group made up of 31 different associations, large employers, and really represents the collective business voice on all issues related to employment.

I'll pass it over to Bill Gardner.

Mr. Bill Gardner (Member, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce): Thank you, Dave.

Mr. Chairperson and honourable members, I submit, with respect, that Bill C-257 is a classic example of bad labour legislation, and I would propose eight reasons for it not to be passed.

First, I suggest that any piece of legislation that is vehemently opposed by one side or the other is likely ill-advised, because the foundation upon which labour relations is built in our system depends upon consent, agreement, and compromise. My labour friends well know that Canadian workers don't react particularly well when something is rammed down their throats; there is no reason to suggest that anything would be different with respect to Canadian employers.

Second, Bill C-257 represents a dramatic change in the balance of bargaining power, and such a change should not be contemplated

without a correspondingly serious need. I don't see such a need existing today across Canada.

Third, labour legislation that bans the use of replacement workers inherently affects different employers differently and is thus discriminatory. If you are a large multi-jurisdictional multi-plant employer, you can have one or more of your operations go down without a correspondingly serious effect. On the other hand, if you are a single-operation independent locally owned business, shut-down of your operation can very quickly be fatal. These types of businesses are the so-called small business operations that government and other organizations generally say are to be encouraged, and that studies show to be the greatest job creators in our economy today, yet this legislation would impact them in correspondingly detrimental way.

Fourth, Bill C-257—and you've heard this from some of the other presenters—has been drafted and, I would suggest, rushed through Parliament without the sort of extensive consultation that should occur well before even the initial drafting phase. None of that has happened in this case.

Fifth—again, you've heard this before—in the 1990s, under the previous Liberal administration, there was a process of extensive consultation regarding the labour code and this issue in particular, which was addressed and found its way into amendments to the Canada Labour Code. Of course, this was without going specifically anywhere nearly as far as Bill C-257 proposes to go.

Sixth, nothing since then has happened would justify considering that the circumstances have dramatically changed.

Seventh, the labour climate in fact appears to be fairly positive throughout Canada. I refer to the able presentation from the gentleman from the United Transportation Union, who suggested that only 3% of collective bargaining situations result in a strike. I can't verify that precise number, but it certainly corresponds with my impression that generally speaking the course of labour relations federally has been relatively smooth in the last few years.

Finally, the fact that the legislation exists in Quebec and British Columbia is no more reason to adopt it federally than the fact that it doesn't exist in eight out of ten other provinces is a reason not to do so. It would be impudent for me to suggest that I know what's good for the people of Quebec or British Columbia. That would be up to others, who know those areas better, but the fact that these pieces of legislation exist in two of our provincial jurisdictions is simply not a good reason to do it.

Those are my respectful submissions.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Angus and Mr. Gardner.

We're now going to move to our last witness for today. We have Mr. Richard Bell, from Tshiuetin Rail Transportation Incorporated.

Dr. Richard Bell (General Manager and Chief Operating Officer, Tshiuetin Rail Transportation Inc.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today and for providing me with this opportunity to comment on Bill C-257. I consider, for various reasons, that this proposed piece of legislation will only derail and hinder operations of rail service that are considered essential by those who benefit from it, such as the railway I represent.

First, let me introduce myself and describe the company I represent. I'm the general manager and chief operating officer of Tshuëtin Rail Transportation Inc., the first aboriginal-owned and -operated railway in North America, and perhaps the world. The shareholders of this railway are the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, the band council of Matimekush—Lac John Innu, and Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam. Each owns one third of the shares of the company.

When the QNS&L decided to stop providing passenger service, the Government of Canada did not see any other alternative to ensure the 800 Naskapi, 700 Innu, and 250 non-natives living in Schefferville remained connected with the rest of Quebec than to set up this railway. Most of Tshuëtin Rail's financial needs are covered by the Government of Canada, which acknowledges that this service is essential to their survival.

Tshuëtin acquired 135 miles of rail line from the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway, or QNS&L. The rail line is located between Schefferville, Quebec, and Emeril Junction, a midpoint some 225 miles north of Sept-Îles, Quebec, and some 80 kilometres from Labrador City, Newfoundland. QNS&L still owns and operates the line between Emeril Junction and Sept-Îles.

Our passenger train departs from Sept-Îles on Mondays and Thursdays, returning from Schefferville on Tuesdays and Fridays. We own the locomotives and the cars used for the service, which include baggage cars, passenger coaches, and even a dining car. But moreover, it is manned and operated by our own crews, which at the present time are 100% Innu and Naskapi. However, while Tshuëtin is on QNS&L track, which runs between Sept-Îles and Emeril, our locomotive engineer is replaced by a QNS&L locomotive operator. Once at Emeril, our crew takes over the rest of the way to Schefferville.

The acquisition of this line by the Innu and Naskapi people has provided them with an opportunity to show the rest of the province of Quebec and Canada that they are a proud people, and that, if given the chance, they can stand on their own feet and contribute their fair share to the advancement of the north.

QNS&L, as ourselves, is a federally regulated railway. We have no unionized employees, but they do. Some 50 locomotive engineers are UTU members. I cannot and will not speculate on what their union would do if there was a strike at QNS&L. There is no guarantee that the passenger service between Sept-Îles and Emeril would be maintained either by unionized employees or by QNS&L management.

With the QNS&L decision to get out of passenger train operation, and since their core business is iron ore—from Labrador City—it only stands to reason where their priority would be placed if they had scarce resources to maintain their operation. Without talking too much about this technical point, it seems to me that the definition of

managers in Bill C-257 might seriously reduce the number of persons who can be used during a strike to replace regular workers. In addition, the English version of proposed subsection 94(2.4) of the bill seems to limit what can be done in terms of operation.

Bill C-257 does not contain any provisions dealing with essential services—and trust me, essential service is exactly what this train is for the population it serves. We are the first aboriginal railway, not only because of our ownership but also because of our customers; 75% of them are first nations people.

Maybe we should stop for a minute and try to define what an essential service is. To me and to the people I represent, eating is essential. Most of the food comes to the Schefferville area by train, and so do the clothes they wear. Being able to move around by car and Ski-Doo is essential, so they need gasoline. Fuel for planes, helicopters, and heavy machinery is also essential and also moves by rail.

The railway is the only ground link between Schefferville and the rest of Quebec. There are no roads connecting this region with the rest of the province. The region is, thus, highly dependent on rail transportation. Moving people, food, fuel, and everyday essentials for that matter can only be done by rail or by plane. But plane is very expensive. A one-way rail trip ticket from Sept-Îles to Schefferville is \$62.82. The airfare is \$690, some 10 times more.

Now, 1,750 people may not be a lot of people when they're not hungry, but wait until the train doesn't come in with the food they need.

The town of Sept-Îles serves as the main supply point for communities in the Schefferville region. More than 73,000 tonnes of products of all types—general merchandise, gasoline and fuel, automobiles, and so on—are transported annually from Sept-Îles to Schefferville. If the train were to stop for only one week, it would mean that 1,400 tonnes of goods and products wouldn't make it to Schefferville. It would also mean a loss of revenue of about \$480,000 for the Sept-Îles suppliers.

● (1610)

Currently, more than 16,000 passengers ride the train each year. This year 807 people took the train to go to Sept-Îles to access medical services not available in their community. Without the train, these people would have had to take the airplane, which is much more expensive. In addition, there are 45 camps located along the track and used by the Uashat mak Mani-Utenam and Matimekush-Lac John communities for fishing, hunting, and trapping trips. They need the train service that travels between these camps and their home.

If the rail service were to be interrupted as a result of a strike, Schefferville region would no longer be supplied with provisions and products of all types, outfitters along the track would no longer be supplied with provisions and would suffer economically as hunters, and fishermen would no longer have access to the outfitters' camps along the way. Members of the Uashat mak Mani-Utenam and Matimekush-Lac John community would no longer have access to their hunting, fishing, and trapping grounds, which is ancestral territory. For a limited number of families, hunting and fishing provide food for part of the year.

I did not want to speculate earlier on what unionized employees would do, so I would not speculate on the reaction of the aboriginal people. But let me guess: they wouldn't be very happy.

If you cannot amend this bill, and I'm told you can't, to include essential service, such as a mixed passenger and freight train service that I provide to the communities in northern Quebec, then don't waste your time with this legislation that will create more problems than there are to be corrected.

The first nations people have ancestral hunting and fishing grounds—

• (1615)

The Chair: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Bell.

Dr. Richard Bell: —that are accessible by rail service only. They would go by plane, but most cannot afford it. To suddenly deprive these people of their rights and take away what they have already come to rely on would not be in the best interests of all of Canada. Bill C-257 will seriously impact our freedom to move and to provide the northern communities with essential rail service.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bell. You're right on time.

Before we start our line of questioning, I'm going to do a couple of housekeeping matters, and then we will start with the Liberals.

I want to introduce to everyone Graeme Truelove, who started with us last week. He is a clerk in training, rather like an apprentice. I don't think Christine has any notions of firing him or anything, but he's going to be apprenticing as a clerk over the next little while with Christine. We want to welcome Graeme Truelove here.

The second thing is that we will have bells at 5:30 for a vote. I think all members are aware of that, but I wanted to mention that as well.

The last thing I want to mention is that there have been a couple of requests.

Mr. Silva has requested a comparison of Bill C-257 as it relates to the Quebec and the B.C. labour code—whatever that may be.

As well, Mr. Martin requested a study of disruption of essential services in Quebec and B.C. The researcher, Kevin, indicates to me that this has been found and is in translation right now and will be distributed to the respective offices on Friday, hopefully.

We have it right now, and the goal is to have it translated and out to your offices—hopefully by Friday.

Those are all the announcements I have. Let's get right into the questioning. We start with the Liberals. Mr. Silva is splitting his time with Mr. Savage.

You have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I thank the witnesses for being here. Some of them, such as Mr. Bell, I have already had an opportunity to meet in person in my office.

I want to get some clarification. Mr. Coles, when he spoke, mentioned that management is not allowed to cross the picket line. I'm not clear where that is in legislation, or where he was reading it from.

The Chair: Mr. Coles has gone. Do you want to address any of the other chambers?

Mr. Mario Silva: It was Mr. Coles who raised the issue, so I thought.... Okay, fair enough.

Some of them also spoke—I'm not sure who, but I thought it was also Mr. Coles—about the negative effects in Quebec. Again I'm going to ask the witnesses whether there's any empirical evidence they could provide the committee. I would greatly appreciate it.

The Chair: Does any chamber want to address that?

Mr. Bill Tufts: Yes. This is Bill Tufts from the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

The last time the Canadian Labour Code was investigated on a thorough basis by a task force was during the Sims task force. The 20 years prior to the Sims task force saw a large period of labour upheaval. In fact, in the 20-year period prior to the Sims task force, there were in total 17 federal work stoppages.

The Sims task force sat at that time and came up with a series of recommendations that were incorporated into the legislation. Since 1999, there has been no need to pass any emergency back-to-work legislation.

It is our opinion that the system is working very well, that there appears to be no problem that needs to be adjusted or rectified. We are happy with the status quo and feel that changes to this act might bring us back to a period of time when there would be some major or serious federal work stoppages or labour upheaval.

Thank you.

• (1620)

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Chair, I thank the witness for his comments, but it doesn't answer my question, which was whether there was any empirical evidence of any economic problems effected by the bill, as it was with the Quebec legislation. That was my question.

But I would like to split my time, as I mentioned, so Mr. Savage could have a round.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, and thank you to the witnesses.

I'm sorry we've lost Charlottetown. I know what it's like...an hour different on the east coast.

We're trying to come to terms with this bill, obviously. We've had people, on the one hand, saying that if we pass this legislation essential services in Canada are going to shut down, the infrastructure of Canada is at risk. On the other hand, we have people suggesting that if we don't pass this legislation there in fact isn't balance in the management-labour situation, and that's not good. I'm trying to find out exactly where we are on this.

I'd like to first of all ask the chambers of commerce a question...or perhaps Mr. Bell. Are you saying you are concerned that unions will force more work stoppages? If this bill passes and the replacement workers are going to be illegal, are you suggesting that unions are going to want to have work stoppages, that this is in their interest?

The Chair: Do any of the chambers want to address that? Winnipeg or Hamilton?

Mr. Bill Tufts: Yes, Len Falco from the Hamilton chamber.

The Chair: Okay, why don't we start with the Hamilton chamber, very quickly, and then we'll go to Winnipeg.

Mr. Len Falco: I guess the whole situation revolves around the fact that we don't want to change it for the benefit of a few. Currently, I think we have a fair and balanced system. It's working well. We haven't had any real problems, so why are we changing it?

The Chair: Winnipeg, you had a quick comment?

Mr. Bill Gardner: Thank you.

If you look at the various methods that have been attempted to resolve bargaining disputes over the years and you follow the history of strikes in Canada and some of its alternatives, including interest arbitration, final-offer selection, and other attempts to come up with an alternative, you'll find that nothing has ever replaced the strike and lockout option as a perfectly balanced way of testing what's important to either side of the bargaining table. The beauty of the strike option—and it's maybe a strange word, but it fits—is that it is equally distasteful and disruptive to both sides.

The entire history of Canadian labour relations and labour legislation, with the exception of B.C. and Quebec and Ontario briefly, has been with the strike and lockout option existing in the context of replacement workers temporarily being available. And it has worked. There's no doubt that labour organizations have made significant gains. They seem to have prospered and expanded without the need for a ban on replacement workers.

If you change that balance, you are bound to have a consequence. Nothing happens without consequences in today's modern economy. In our view, it is bound to be ill-advised where one side is vehemently against it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gardner.

Do you have one quick follow-up, Mr. Savage?

Mr. Michael Savage: I have one question.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce indicated that this would detract from Canada's attractiveness as a place in which to invest. I was going to ask about other countries, but I don't have enough time to do that.

I'll just ask, do you have specific examples of companies that have refused to invest in either B.C. or Quebec or Ontario while they had similar legislation?

The Chair: Hamilton chamber.

Mr. Len Falco: This is Len Falco from the Hamilton chamber.

I don't have anything specifically with me right now. There are a number of academic and government studies that have found that a ban on replacement workers has been much more harmful than helpful to the local economy. There generally is less business investment. As a matter of fact, one study found that investment rates are 25% lower in the two provinces that have a ban on replacement workers than those without a ban.

I'm sorry, I don't have the backup information on that, but I could get that for you if you wish.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you. If you have any forthcoming information, that would be great.

We are going to move to the Bloc. Madame Lavallée, you have seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to start by congratulating someone, which is rather unusual for me. I would like to congratulate Richard Bell, because he has actually read the bill.

I would like to correct one of the Chambers of Commerce that presented a brief a little earlier: subclause (2.4) of the bill refers to subsection (2.3). In no way does it require a company to do nothing in the case of a labour dispute. In fact, it does quite the opposite. Although there seem to be some problems in the English version, the French version is identical to the Quebec legislation, the Quebec Labour Code, which has been in place for 30 years.

Subclauses (2.3) and (2.4)—and I'm speaking from memory here—state that a company may take steps to protect its infrastructure and equipment. I am thinking, for example of an aluminum boiler that must be kept operating. The company, in that case, could negotiate with the union either to use unionized workers or to hire additional workers.

And that is where subclause (2.4) comes into play. It states that these must be conservation measures exclusively. That is really what the bill states. The Quebec Labour Code is very clear on this. Perhaps there is some ambiguity in the English version, but if that is so, it will be corrected.

The Bloc Québécois drafted this bill. I must tell you that any interpretation other than the one we provide is put forward in bad faith. Unfortunately, that is the fact of the matter.

There is another point. The Canada Labour Code contains another measure. It states in section 87.4—and once again I am working from memory—that some activities must be maintained if they are necessary to prevent any risks to public safety and health. There is already a provision of this type in the Canada Labour Code.

Reread the Canada Labour Code, Mr. Bell, because I know you are particularly concerned. I understand your concerns, because you are in a special situation. However, it is clear that a strike could never result in having people starve or compromising public safety and security. That is very clear. That is not the objective of this bill.

This legislation has been in place in Quebec for 30 years, and it works very well. Moreover, 911 services are governed by the Quebec Labour Code. There has never been a catastrophe, and no one has ever complained that public health or safety had been endangered. Furthermore, the Quebec Labour Code applies to the Ministry of Health. It applies to nurses, to health care services, and to specialists. In each case, the parties reach an accommodation, so to speak, they find a way of deciding on what should be done and negotiating the essential services.

Even when there is no legislation on replacement workers, you must assume that unions are acting in good faith. This is so much the case that in each instance, a way was found of negotiating the essential services. I read in the *The Globe and Mail*—unfortunately I don't have the article with me and so I cannot translate it for you into French, because I would be too afraid of making mistakes—that there is a union about to go on strike that is negotiating—I believe the union is present here today—in the Greater Toronto Area. It even agreed to maintain GO Transit services during the strike. I think that shows good faith on the part of the union. There are representatives of that union here, and I would like to ask them a few questions.

Did your union in fact propose this to the employer? Why did you do that? Could you explain that further?

•(1630)

[English]

Mr. Tim Secord: Madame Lavallée, the reason for the proposal is initially that the code requires that the parties, before they start to bargain collectively, have to address the issue of the maintenance of activities agreement. As I stated before, we attempted to do that with the employer prior to negotiations starting. The employer—in this case, CN—said they didn't think there were any services that were essential for us to maintain, so that was the end of that. Both sides agreed, and neither side applied to the board to argue for an order otherwise.

However, as we move closer and closer to the strike deadline of February 9, it has become apparent, as we've seen in *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Star*, that the passenger community is extremely worried about getting to and from work. It's the same in some stories in *The Gazette*. But our issue is not with the travelling public, the riding public, the riders and users of GO Transit, or of AMT in Quebec, in Montreal. It's with the employer, CN Rail.

It's not our intention to hold the travelling public hostage in a dispute that we have but which they have nothing to do with. We went back to the employer, CN, because they run the crews for GO Transit, for example, and AMT. They're our members under contract.

We proposed to CN that we find the solution to the problem of these riders being caught up in a labour dispute so that they won't get stuck.

In other words, we went back to CN again and proposed that we look at a maintenance of activities agreement for the commuter services. We're still waiting for an answer. The commuter population that uses the service is hanging in the balance at the moment as we await an answer. I understand that CN is going to be here tomorrow in front of the committee, so perhaps you can ask CN tomorrow if they have an answer. We'd like to know as well.

The Chair: That's all the time we have. I want to thank Madame Lavallée for asking some questions. We're making progress here. This is good.

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

Dr. Richard Bell: Mr. Chair, did you want me to respond to Caroline's—

The Chair: Make it a quick response before we go to Mr. Martin.

Dr. Richard Bell: I thank her for her comments.

My point on proposed subsection (2.4) was that the English section should read the same as the French section. I think that's been pointed out before.

With respect to section 87.4, it basically deals with immediate and serious danger to safety and health. I'm talking about essential services. The Government of Canada recognized that essential services were necessary for Schefferville. This is why they invested in a railway. It has nothing to do with talking about immediate danger to safety and health, but essential services.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martin, you have seven minutes, please.

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

In what I've heard so far in these deliberations, it seems to me that what everybody is looking for is stability. In industry and in the economy, from time to time we find ourselves in dispute over levels of pay, etc. We get to a point where there is a strike, and then there is instability and difficulty in the community where that strike occurs.

I would guess that the chambers of commerce in particular would be concerned about that. Their overarching interest in this would be to maintain as much stability as possible, with as few lost days as possible. I would guess that would probably be the case as well when it comes to essential services. Probably the fewer strikes that are staged, the better for everybody concerned.

When I was here last week, I asked for some evidence that moving to a ban on the use of replacement workers would either increase or decrease the possibility of strikes. We have some numbers here today that I would like to put out, and then maybe I'll get some response from particularly the chambers in this instance.

In Ontario, from 1990 to 2006, remember that there was a short period of time between about 1993 and 1995 when there was a ban on replacement workers. The total number of lost days due to work stoppage was 12,443,840. In this sector that we are talking about here today, which represents about 6.7% of all Canadian workers, there were 7,800,050 lost days between 1990 and 2006.

Then we move to the jurisdictions where there is in fact a ban on replacement workers. Let's look at Quebec, which represents 21% of all Canadian workers. We get to 8,863,180 lost days. In British Columbia, where we have 11% of all Canadian workers, the number of days lost to work stoppage was 5,230,176. It would seem to me that these figures would indicate very clearly that where you have jurisdictions that have moved to a situation in which you are not allowing replacement workers, the number of lost days is significantly lower. Could any of the chambers respond to that?

• (1635)

The Chair: Do Hamilton and Winnipeg want to respond to that?

Mr. Bill Gardner: Winnipeg will. I'm happy to respond to that.

Yes, stability is desired, and fewer strikes are, generally speaking, better than more, and shorter strikes are better than longer strikes. Nevertheless, no attempt to replace the current strike and lockout option has succeeded in the long run, in my experience in Manitoba. You will be familiar with alternative attempts, such as final-offer selection. Ontario has tried interest arbitration. Anything that changes the balance where a strike or a lockout is mutually distasteful to the parties tends not to work well in the long run.

Listening to the statistics, I am reminded of the old adage that there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. The problem with those statistics is that you don't know what other variables are in there. There would be many reasons for more or fewer work stoppages, so those statistics alone aren't going to tell us anything about the effects of any replacement worker legislation.

The more important question to me—and I am going back again to the statistic quoted by the able presenter on behalf of the United Transportation Union—is that if the rate of strikes federally is around 3%, then what are we trying to fix? It ain't broke.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, you have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Tony Martin: I was wondering if perhaps the other chamber would have a different.... Because the question that was asked earlier was if there was any evidence to show that in fact having a ban on replacement workers was helpful, then bring it forward and we'll look at it. So I've just brought forward some numbers that I think indicate very clearly that in jurisdictions where you have a ban on replacement workers you have more stability. And in terms of growing an economy and attracting investment, it seems to me, certainly from my work at the provincial level, that what you're looking for is a stable labour relations climate. Certainly British Columbia—we had somebody speak to us here when I was at committee a week ago—said their economy is booming. I think the economy in Quebec is doing quite well too, if I understand correctly.

• (1640)

Mr. Bill Tufts: We don't understand what the problem is. We don't understand what needs to be fixed. Our statistics show there have been zero labour stoppages or zero labour disputes that had to be

legislated back to work, compared to the period of time before the Sims task force prior to 1999, when there were 17. Since 1999, there have been no legislated back-to-work labour disputes. We think the system is working well the way it is. We see no need to change the current system, and to support the members that we have at the chamber of commerce, we feel that the system is working very well. We don't see a problem. We're happy with the status quo and we feel that to make a change could be devastating and very damaging to the Canadian economy. It doesn't matter if it's a bank that's shut down, if it's an airport that's shut down, a railway, or a port. The potential damage to Canada's reputation on a world level far outdoes any other issue here.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tufts, and thank you, Mr. Martin. That's all the time we have. We'll have to catch you on the second round.

We're going to move to the last questioner of the first round. We have Mr. Lake, seven minutes please.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is going to be for Mr. Secord.

On Thursday I was reading to the committee about a letter from Mr. Sidney Green, a former NDP cabinet minister from Manitoba. He wrote an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* expressing his concerns about this legislation, and talked of political games and disruption of balance, lack of fairness, among other things. At the end of his letter, he writes:

But that will not be the end of it. Just as violence begets violence, legislation begets legislation. When the unseen consequences of the legislation begin to raise their ugly heads, there will be amendments upon amendments in an attempt to make the unworkable work. Each of the amendments will spawn further difficulties and more legislation.

Industrial relations will shift its locale from union meetings, negotiating tables and picket lines to lawyers' offices, board meetings, court rooms and other locations far removed from the workplace.

The employees will have exchanged freedom for an institutionalized, bureaucratized and regimentalized system of industrial relations.

In the end, it will have proven to be a bad bargain.

He's speaking to your members. Not only does he say this is bad legislation coming out of a unique parliamentary situation, but it's even going to hurt your members. What are your thoughts on that, Mr. Secord?

Mr. Tim Secord: First of all, you mentioned he was speaking to my members.

Mr. Mike Lake: Yes, this is a former NDP cabinet minister from Manitoba.

Mr. Tim Secord: Former? That's probably why he's a former member, because he said silly things like that. That's probably why he's not a member today.

Honestly, Mr. Lake, I don't know what to say. Quite frankly, I'd think he's out of touch with reality. We've got a serious imbalance in this code. I heard today and I've read some of the evidence from the previous sessions, and there was a lot of "Chicken Little, the sky is falling" kind of stuff, how essential services weren't addressed in this bill, and they were referring to proposed subsection (2.4). But proposed subsection (2.4) of the bill is actually complementary to section 87.4 of the code. It actually builds on the language of the code and clarifies what the intent of section 87.4 was. I mean, that's the beauty of this bill.

Mr. Mike Lake: You say it's imbalanced. Nearly half a decade of work went into the current legislation. Since 1999 there's been no back-to-work legislation imposed. You even said we only have a 3% strike and lockout rate right now.

Witnesses on all sides have said that this piece of legislation we have in front of us is flawed. Even people who are in favour of the legislation have said that it's flawed. There's no essential services provision. There's none. There is confusion between the French and English versions, total discontinuity in fact. There are different interpretations as to what clause 2.4 actually means. I think we've developed a clear understanding now that it means managers can't even work, beyond turning on the lights.

So the question I have is what's the point of this? I think it's been asked by some of the other witnesses today. What's the point of the legislation? Paul Forder from CAW, who you might know, came before us prior to Christmas, and I think he shed some light on this. Something he said, talking about clause 2.4, was,

If the operation can't function with replacement workers, that's fine with us. We'll be able to get a settlement earlier. That's something that all members should be interested in pursuing. That's the whole purpose of the legislation.

The whole purpose of the legislation is basically one-sided. It's to create a one-sided situation.

Mr. Bell, I want to speak to you for a second about the balance, and I'm particularly interested in your situation. Can you speak to the balance that exists now versus the balance that would exist under this legislation? For example, if the union were to go on strike, what options would you have as a company under this new legislation, this proposed legislation?

• (1645)

Dr. Richard Bell: If the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway went on strike, we could not get the train out of Seven Islands, as we actually take the train 225 miles up the line. They have to run the train. If they can't provide workers, replacement workers, or management to run the train, we're stopped.

Mr. Mike Lake: How does that speak to the balance at the negotiating table then?

Dr. Richard Bell: In what sense do you mean?

Mr. Mike Lake: It seems to me—

Dr. Richard Bell: I do not negotiate with the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway.

Mr. Mike Lake: Fair enough. That's true. You're talking about something that's outside of your control there.

Actually I want to move to the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce for a second. I'm thinking about their unique area and their situation. I'm particularly envisioning a strike or a lockout situation in the railway transport industry or the ports there, and what impact that might have on, for example, the steel industry and the workers in the steel industry.

Mr. Len Falco: I'm Len Falco from the Hamilton chamber.

That would have a devastating impact on the steel industry in particular, but also on a lot of the other industries that rely not only on the steel but the related...and on the communities around us.

As the Hamilton port is a central distribution hub for a lot of product and supplies and materials through to the U.S. border, through the St. Lawrence Seaway, that situation would just bring everything to a major standstill. It would be, as I say, devastating.

Mr. Mike Lake: How much of the economy of Hamilton is reliant on the transportation industry there to move their product? What percentage are we talking about?

Mr. Bill Tufts: Our statistics show that it's almost 4% of Ontario's total GDP and 30% of the greater Hamilton region's GDP, which indirectly or directly impacts on a daily basis 220,000 jobs. That's the extent of what we're talking about here, and that's just the port. That doesn't include transportation via highways or transportation via airports, for which Hamilton is a major hub as well.

So the impact, in our opinion, would be huge, a fact that is frightening.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen from the Hamilton chamber, and thank you, Mr. Lake.

We're now going to move to the five-minute rounds, and we're going to start with Mr. Dryden. I believe he's going to share his time with Ms. Dhalla.

You have five minutes, sir.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): I have one question... probably for the two chambers, Mr. Gardner and Mr. Tufts. As everybody has said in their answers, they're looking for balance and they are trying to determine whether this shifts the balance. We're hearing arguments on both sides.

I asked earlier for information about the different jurisdictions that have changed: Quebec being one, since 1977; B.C., in the nineties; and then Ontario, back and forth in the nineties. What was the result in each instance when the change happened?

We have the Canadian Bankers Association's submission here. All of you have said there's a general, very significant downward trend in terms of lost days in every jurisdiction. What's quite clear from the graphs is that essentially there's not really any significant change at all in those jurisdictions that have made the change, as opposed to those that haven't.

I hear very strongly the hypothetical, the possibility of disaster, but labour relations are about avoiding disasters. It shows, from these graphs, that in Ontario and Quebec and B.C., in every instance, those disasters have been avoided, whether this has been in place or it hasn't.

Tell me again, why. I hear your hypothetical, but it is quite clear that there really isn't a significant difference, year-in, year-out, from those jurisdictions that have changed and those that haven't.

• (1650)

The Chair: Hamilton, go ahead.

Mr. Bill Tufts: This is Bill Tufts from the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

Honourable member, I would respectfully disagree with your assessment. Our statistics show that during the period of the Sims task force, indeed there was a period of major labour upheaval. There were 17 occasions on which legislated work stoppages had to be ended and those employees put back to work. Since 1999 there have been no incidents of emergency back-to-work legislation.

In our opinion, after a half decade of consultation that led up to the Sims task force, the system is working very well. In fact, any changes at this point will open the door for what you're indicating in terms of potential risks or liabilities. Why even open the door to those potential liabilities?

Hon. Ken Dryden: Look at the number of lost person-days. In Ontario, from when this begins back in 1976, it changes a little bit from year to year, but not much.

Anyway, I'm sorry, I've taken too much time here.

Ruby.

The Chair: Ms. Dhalla, for a minute and a half.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): I would actually ask a similar question to what Mr. Dryden posed, but to the union. As the union you represent workers from all across Canada. Have you done any studies, or do you have any type of research or evidence to show the impact on your particular workers in terms of strike frequency or durations between British Columbia, Quebec, and other provinces that don't have the legislation in place right now?

Mr. Tim Secord: The difficulty in answering your question, Ms. Dhalla, is that almost 100% of our members are in federal jurisdictions, regardless of the province in which they work. They work for Canadian National, for example, and the contract would be coast to coast. So I guess the short answer is no, and that's the reason why.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Just to pick up with the Hamilton chamber on what Mr. Dryden was speaking about, you said you had research and statistics that showed otherwise in terms of there not being a differentiation between the provinces. Is that correct?

The Chair: Would the Hamilton chamber respond to that?

Mr. Bill Tufts: Could you repeat the question, please?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I was building upon what Mr. Dryden said. You said in your answer you actually have research that shows there is a differentiation in terms of walkouts and strike duration between

some of the provinces that have the legislation and others that don't. Is that correct?

Mr. Bill Tufts: Our statistics are at a federal level. We're showing that there have been no legislated work stoppages since 1999. Some of the statistics we're talking about are within the specific regimes of the provinces of B.C. and Quebec. There might be different reasons for the differentiation between the provincial governments, for example, different types of provincial governments. I'm sure if we went back to look at the history, for example, of Ontario, with Bob Rae controlling the provincial labour situation, we would see differences between each provincial government. Maybe that's the reason. I don't know the exact answer on that.

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

We're going to move to Mr. Lessard. You have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

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

I would also like to thank our guests for coming today to tell us what they think about this bill.

I would like to start by comparing your opposition to Bill C-257 with the actual facts of the matter. Would it not be more advisable for you to advocate that Bill C-257 be passed for the following reasons? If we are trying to be objective, we have to realize that between 20 and 25 per cent of federally-regulated workers are unionized. We know that only 3 per cent of the collective agreements negotiated result in a labour dispute. Ultimately, we are talking about quite small numbers of people who could benefit from the legislation. You said as well—and all the parties here acknowledge this—that generally speaking, labour relations between employers and unions in federally-regulated areas are quite harmonious.

Your argument to justify your opposition to Bill C-257 is based mainly on the movement of goods and services, particularly air and rail transportation. We have seen that the other arguments did not stand up, particularly those having to do with banks and the 911 emergency service, either because these companies are not unionized, or because they come under provincial jurisdiction. So let us look just at the transportation sector.

We know that in both rail and air transportation, pilots, mechanics and train conductors must take seven to twelve years of training in order to do the job properly. Consequently, it is very difficult to replace them in the case of a labour dispute.

Is the company not shooting itself in the foot when it says that it will advocate the use of replacement workers rather than directly negotiating essential services with the unions?

Let us look at the statement made by CN, for example. If it rejects negotiations on essential services, how will it be able to negotiate with its locomotive drivers in the case of a strike? They cannot be replaced very easily.

I would just like to hear what you have to say about this. There's a weakness in this argument somewhere.

My question is both to the representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and to the people associated with rail transportation. On December 7, 2006, the Railway Association of Canada gave the example of your railway, Mr. Bell, and today you are telling us that your workers are not unionized, and your fear stems from the fact that a transshipment occurred in Sept-Îles, for example, where the workers are not unionized. The same argument applies to the Chambers of Commerce with respect to the two other rail companies.

I would like to hear your comments on this.

• (1655)

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would like to address that? Do you, Mr. Bell, or do one the chambers?

Mr. Bell.

Dr. Richard Bell: I can perhaps start.

I don't have a copy of what the RAC had previously submitted, but we are non-unionized, and there is a unionized railway in Sept-Îles.

Mr. Lessard mentioned the time element required to train locomotive engineers and those who would be replacing them. I'm not sure exactly what he's getting at. If a railway needed to look for replacement workers, they'd have to find them within the management ranks, provided that they are qualified in that previous trade and are qualified by the rules and regulations and that they meet all the requirements.

The Chair: Does a chamber want to quickly add to that at all?

Mr. Bill Gardner: I'll take a shot at it, from Winnipeg.

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much. Just give a quick answer, if you could.

Mr. Bill Gardner: In my initial submission, I indicated that I wouldn't purport to speak about what's good for the people of Quebec. Sir, don't you think that employers are the best judges of what's in their interest? When employers are as unanimously opposed to this legislation as they are, don't you think that should be given some weight?

In response to some earlier questions, let me ask a question myself. I still don't understand what has changed so dramatically from the 1990s, when the government, under the Liberals, considered this issue, addressed it, put changes into the Canada Labour Code, and didn't think it was necessary to go as far as banning replacement workers. And now there seems to be a need.

• (1700)

The Chair: I just need a point of clarification.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: With all due respect, I think that you have not answered the question. We are not going back to the days when the Liberals were in power. Today, we have a bill, Bill C-257, and a Conservative government. This bill is now being debated in this committee. My question is clear.

When I think of the vulnerable position in which employers place themselves vis-à-vis the unions as they refuse to negotiate essential services, I feel that they are showing a predisposition to mistrusting their own employees and to doubting the success that is possible in establishing good labour relations. Would it not be an advantage for employers to negotiate essential services instead of relying on replacement workers? And if there is no advantage for them, why is that? We still do not understand.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's all the time we have, Mr. Lessard. I'm sorry, we're way over time with that clarification.

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

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you very much.

I want to follow up on the comments of Mr. Bell. I think he raised some important issues and put them on the table—for example, what will railway companies do when there's a circumstance where a remote community is isolated and is in need of supplies, food, etc.?

I'd like to hear from Mr. Secord in terms of some of those issues and how your workers would respond to and deal with that kind of circumstance. We've heard a lot about essential services here at this committee.

Mr. Tim Secord: As long as the chair recognizes that these comments are hypothetical, of course.

You're right, the issues that Mr. Bell has raised are really important, especially to his operation and the people who rely on that service. What I think people are forgetting is that section 87.4 in the code is already there. If an employer believes that a portion of their business is so essential to the community—for example, in Mr. Bell's case, getting people back and forth for community services, health services, food, etc.—all they have to do is go to section 87.4. If they can't get an agreement with the union then they have the right to apply to the Canada Labour Relations Board for an order to be issued by the board. They can make argument in front of the board, and the board can issue the order. That's the fail-safe that was built into the code in section 87.4.

Proposed subsection 94(2.4) now clarifies that. All it does is tweak section 87.4 just a bit so that nobody can abuse section 87.4. Where the problem exists is that employers seem to not want to apply the provisions of 87.4, and then after the strike takes place they want to call foul and say, "Wait a minute. We want to go to the board and apply 87.4 because all of a sudden we now know that these services should have been essential." Well, it's too late, fellas. You had the chance under the code; there were criteria set out, and you should have used it. We are not averse, in our indication, in our actions of this last week...we are not shutting the door on the public. Our issues are with our employers.

In the example of the Quebec North Shore, which is the employer for our members that Mr. Bell's people are affected by, in this case, if the Quebec North Shore were faced with a labour dispute, then it would be Quebec North Shore that would have to apply under section 87.4 to seek essential services or a maintenance of activities agreement, and they would have to argue, on Mr. Bell's behalf, that that was the type of service that was essential for that community. Whether we agree or disagree with the employer—in this case, Quebec North Shore—Quebec North Shore can then take it to the board and the board can order it.

There's a fail-safe built into the system. Everybody is running around here saying the sky is falling—it's not.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, you have a minute and a half left.

Mr. Tony Martin: That was the only question I had.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

We're going to move to Ms. Yelich for five minutes, please.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Did you say you are bargaining right now, on February 7, with your union or with the CN? Did I hear that right?

• (1705)

Mr. Tim Secord: On February 9, yes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: On the ninth you're going to be bargaining for wages?

Mr. Tim Secord: The ninth is the strike deadline.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: It's the strike deadline? If you go on strike—this will be CN—you're going to basically shut down, but what about all the people who depend on you to ship their goods? We're talking about farmers mainly, who should have the sympathy of the nation because they've gone through lots. We're talking about their trying to meet their commitments to their buyers. Who speaks for them? You have your union and the CN. And I'll tell you, the CN has issues with farmers too. So when you go on strike—I'm just wondering—are you thinking about what the union would do to the country without some replacement legislation or what it would do to our economy?

Don't you think this is missing in the debate of how important it is that there be absolutely no interruption in shipping when it comes...? It would never be deemed essential. No grains would be deemed essential, but it is essential for farmers to get that grain to the port. So if you decide to do this in February, which is just about the time the Canadian Wheat Board starts shipping out some grains, you have caused some undue harm to somebody who has no control, no power, right?

Mr. Tim Secord: Well, no; perhaps it's just a phrasing of the question, but you're right, we would be a part—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: No, we're talking hypothetically too, because this is what they're telling us from the other side. Mr. Dryden said everything's hypothetical. No, that isn't hypothetical—that's a truth. That will happen.

Mr. Tim Secord: If there is a strike, absolutely, somebody's going to be adversely affected somewhere, no question. And you were right in the example you gave: the movement of Canadian wheat this winter could possibly be affected. Do we have a concern about those

farmers? Absolutely. But we have to remember, it's not just the union in the bargaining relationship; it's the employer, and the employer had every opportunity to apply section 87.4 and refused to. So the employer has to—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: It's between you and the employer.

Mr. Tim Secord: No, it's between this committee and that employer as well, because you're asking me the question and trying to hold my union accountable for the actions of a strike that we have the right to exercise under the code. But it doesn't appear that CN will be held to the same level of accountability.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I'm not asking you to say that you don't have the right to strike. That you do have, and I've no problems with that. But the fact is if that grain stops and there are no replacement workers, that grain will not get to the coast. The farmers will not meet their commitments, and then there will be a huge economic shutdown for the farmers. They can't afford to have those kinds of things happening.

I think the legislation is really doing more harm to the economy and to the consumers and the people of Canada than it is to a union or the employer, because you can choose another employer. You can go work for CP. CN can shut down. We don't have that choice. We only have CN, and we need you. So I think you're not giving the people who depend on you.... This legislation takes the balance out of the bargaining.

Mr. Tim Secord: But that's the economic pressure the union relies on. The only thing they can do when they go on strike is to force some kind of economic pressure on the employer, in this case, CN. Where would they feel it from? They'd feel the pinch coming from those farmers who are saying "What are you doing? We have to move our grain." The point is to push them towards a settlement.

On the issue of balance, if a union chooses to go on strike, right now the employer can use replacement workers. Right now, the way the code is written, if that same employer locks the employees out, he can also use replacement workers. So where's the level of balance and fairness in that scenario when he's got his cake and he can eat it too? He has it both ways.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: But the debate is about federal legislation that right now has struck a balance. The debate should be on what is good for this country, because it is huge in trade, and exports are so important. That's where the debate has to go. Between you and your union, I think you have that balance—or, I would say, having listened to all of the presenters, you have a good balance.

If you have problems with CN, to tell you the truth, so do the farmers. Are you going to go to bat for the farmer and say that CN shouldn't charge those farmers so much for hauling that grain because that's unfair? You know what they're going to say? They're going to ask if you'd like to take a wage cut.

I think you're missing something in the debate. I think you have your balance. The people who rely on shipping to the coast don't have the balance because they are international. They're in the global trading market.

• (1710)

The Chair: Please make just a quick final comment. We're out of time, but go ahead, Mr. Secord.

Mr. Tim Secord: If I may, Ms. Yelich, just so you know, a lot of our members are farmers and we have always gone to bat for the farming community in western Canada and eastern Canada. We don't leave the farmers hanging out there to dry. We understand the comments about captive shippers. We know it very well, and we support those farmers 100%.

The Chair: Ms. Yelich, that's all the time we have right now, but thank you for that.

We're going to move to our next round, and the Liberals. You're all done?

Okay, then we're going to move back to one last questioner. We'll go to Mr. Wallace for five minutes, and then we'll be done.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): I appreciate being here today. I'm substituting on the committee, so I haven't really had the length of debate everyone else at the table has had.

Just as a little background on me, I'm actually from a union household. My father is retired now, but he worked in a union at Ontario Hydro, although he made it to management and got out of the union. I actually experienced a number of strikes, one lasting about four months, when my father was still in the union. It was not a happy time at my household when that happened. My sister and my brother-in-law work at a professional organization. They don't like to call it a union, but that's really what it is.

One of my questions is for our union representatives here today. We're talking about balance. I agree that the piece should be about balance. It's my understanding—and I think it happened with my father—that when you go on strike, you can find another job while you're on strike, and you can work. At this point in my opinion, it is not really fair that a person can go on strike and still get employment elsewhere, but the company has no repercussions for that based on what you'd like to do in terms of replacement workers.

In their case, there were no replacement workers. It was at a nuclear plant, so they're not easy to train in order to get it operating. Management ran the place, which is another issue altogether.

So my first question to you, sir, is that if you want to change it so that there are no replacement workers, should workers not be able to get second jobs when they're on strike?

Mr. Tim Secord: Do you mean strikebound workers?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Yes. If my father was on strike, he went and got another job. Maybe the legislation should be saying that if you're putting a company at risk by not working for them, then you're not allowed to work, period. I want to know how you feel about that.

Mr. Tim Secord: I think you'd have a problem with the ILO, to start with, because I'd certainly make sure they were coming after you.

Absolutely not. That's insane. How do you restrict somebody from having the right to go on strike? You enshrine it in the legislation, and then you tell them that, by the way, they can only exercise it in circumstances where they promise not to go get another job.

Mr. Mike Wallace: That's exactly my point, sir. But you're sitting on the other side of the table and you're telling the employer, the company, that based on this legislation, if it passes, they cannot hire somebody to replace that worker who has gone on strike. I don't

think it's a balance. A person, as an employee, can go get another job somewhere else while they're on strike, but the employer cannot get somebody to replace that person who is on strike. How is that balanced?

If you want a balanced system—which I think the present legislation, not the one proposed, actually supports—then if you're on strike, that's fine. For the 3% of strikes that actually happen, which is the number you used today, if there is a need for a replacement worker who has ability to do the job—and that's not the case in all cases, because there are unionized jobs for people who have special skills sets, so let's be realistic that they are not replaceable by people off the street without a lot of training and so on to make that happen—does the present legislation not give balance both to the employer and the employee in the present situation?

• (1715)

Mr. Tim Secord: Absolutely not, but I do appreciate the fact that you recognize there are special skill sets out there. Not everybody can do everybody's job.

In answer to the question, no, the fairness is not there, because the employer.... If you say to the unions, the workers, that they have the right to strike but it's hollow because they can now be replaced with replacement workers, and that the economic pressure that they can bring to bear on the employer is moot, what's the point of having the right to strike?

Mr. Mike Wallace: I absolutely disagree that it's moot, because you already admitted that a replacement worker cannot necessarily, in a lot of jobs, replace the skill set that was there with the people who are on strike. It's not a moot job. What you said earlier in your presentation was that the only recourse for the company under this new legislation would be to get back to the table and negotiate, because they have no other recourse. But the employee has recourse by going on strike and getting another job. I don't think that is fair, so I think there should be a change.

The only other thing I want to let you know is that the public service came to see me in my office. I asked them directly when the last time was that they were on strike. They gave me a number of dates when they've been on strike, and I asked them when the Government of Canada has ever replaced the workers. It has never happened that they know of. The people I was speaking to could be wrong, but they were the heads of the union, so I'm assuming they're right.

My point is, why would we want to change the legislation when, in your own numbers, you say there are strikes only about 3% of the time? In the vast majority of cases, it's almost impossible for replacement workers to do the job that is there, so are we not wasting a lot of time on an issue that is not of public importance at this particular time, based on the review that was done in 1990?

Am I all done?

The Chair: You're all done.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madame Lavallée would like me to talk for another fifteen minutes, because she knows I can do it.

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

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today.

Mr. Lessard, did you have a quick point before we move on to motions?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Our colleague Wallace has raised a very important point. I think that it was not raised here, for good reason. The people who appeared before the committee understand that the bill does not prevent the employer from continuing to produce by using management. This is the first point.

The gentleman asked the question and he might be interested in the answer. Only two elements are missing from the picture.

[English]

The Chair: That's a point of debate, so we're going to leave that for now.

I do want to thank the witnesses right now—

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: There is an inaccurate statement. First, management is allowed to work; then, the employees—

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lessard, you'll have to address that tomorrow with our new witnesses.

We do want to thank all the witnesses, including the chambers from Winnipeg, from Hamilton, and from Charlottetown, whose representatives aren't here.

Mr. Bell and Mr. Secord, thank you for taking the time to be here. We really appreciate it.

We'd like to get into motions right now.

Mr. Martin, you have a motion before us that the chair present the following report to the House:

That the new Minister of Human Resources and Social Development re-examine and provide a comprehensive response to each recommendation of the First Report of the Committee entitled "Summer Career Placement Program" which concerned matters raised in the Tenth Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and Status of Persons with Disabilities in the First Session of the Thirty-Eighth Parliament entitled "Summer Career Placement Program",

That the Government implement the Committee's unanimous recommendations in time for the 2007 Summer Career Placement Program,

And that pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to the Report.

Is there any debate on this, or are we going to go right to a vote?

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: We're talking about the government again responding to the report. The minister has already responded, right?

The Chair: What Mr. Martin is asking is that the new minister respond, yes. The government has responded already.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: They've responded. Isn't that the response? Why would we—

The Chair: What he's asking is for the new minister to re-examine.

Once again, we have had a response from the government.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Could you just mention one thing? Hasn't this committee gone on and had recommendations accepted by the House? Am I right that the committee forwarded the recommendations and that they have been accepted? No? Yes?

• (1720)

The Chair: I'm not sure. I know we've already sent one report.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: So recommendations are made to the House.

The Chair: There has been a response from the government. I don't know what all the recommendations are.

Mr. Martin, and then Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Tony Martin: The response from the government was one page, thank you very much, very nice report, good luck, and oh, by the way, there's a \$55 million reduction in the cost-cutting that happened before Christmas.

We'd like to remind the minister that there was a very comprehensive report and detailed study of the summer career placement program, which is a very important program across this country. It was done by this committee. There was unanimous agreement that we should push it forward.

There was no expectation at that time that there would be a reduction in the budget. As a matter of fact, some of us were hoping that there might be an increase, particularly if the ministry was going to respond to the recommendations that we made to be cognizant of some of the challenges in economically depressed areas in the country.

I would like the new minister, who frankly in my interactions so far has expressed an openness to listen and be more generous, in terms of some of these kinds of initiatives, to have an opportunity to take a look at that report, and make sure that he saw it and was briefed on it. Then perhaps he could respond to us.

I think we need to do this as quickly as possible. As we speak, I'm sure that they're making decisions about how the program is going to roll out, and about exactly how much money will be in it and to what parts of the country it will go.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

We have Mr. Wallace, followed by Mr. Savage.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you.

It's just for a clarification. I read the first part of the motion about asking the new minister to respond to something that's already been there. The second part speaks to implementing the committee's unanimous recommendations.

I have two questions. If it was unanimous recently—I'm assuming on this side also—is that part of the report? I need to know whether it's part of the report. Also, can a committee charge the government to implement something, or does it recommend something?

The Chair: Like all committees, I believe that we make recommendations, and it's up to the government to respond how they see fit.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I'm concerned about the wording where it says "implement the Committee's unanimous recommendations". Is the intent of the mover to re-recommend them? Was it stated as a recommendation, or was it stated as a requirement to be implemented? That's how I read it, so I'm interested to know the answer.

The Chair: Once again, Mr. Wallace, any committee can make recommendations, but it's up to the government to decide what they will implement, and they will give us a response. We can only recommend.

What Mr. Martin is asking is that the new minister re-examine. That's sort of the key word in there.

Mr. Mike Wallace: That's not in the second part of the motion.

Of course I have no issue with the minister getting up to speed on everything and coming back to this committee to talk about the recommendations regarding the summer career placement program.

My issue with the second paragraph is that as a layman who just read that, "the government implement the Committee's unanimous recommendations", it sounds like you're requiring the minister to do it. I don't think that's appropriate. If the wording were changed to allow him to come back and discuss what those recommendations are, and what he and cannot do, that would be my approach.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: In my view, the summer career placement program is one of the most important issues that this committee should be looking at right now, because of the timing. The government's disgraceful cuts to this program are going to be felt by all of us in our ridings. If you're not getting calls now, you will be getting calls from worthwhile community groups in your riding and students in need of assistance.

This is hogwash about private companies benefiting. In my riding, every single grant went to a non-profit organization. We can only hope that the new minister has more of a heart and the ability to see the value of this program. We're talking about so little money in the overall scheme of things.

In the spirit of non-partisanship, which I embrace all the time, as my colleague from finance would know, I think we should adopt this unanimously. I'd like to see the minister come and talk about this program, because it is important to Canadians right now.

I support the motion.

The Chair: I appreciate those non-partisan comments.

Mr. Lessard, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: First of all, I would like to understand the motion. Is this Mr. Martin's motion, or is it Mr. Wallace's suggestion? What are we debating?

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: We are still debating the motion; no amendments were proposed.

Mr. Mike Wallace: May I move an amendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Mr. Lessard, followed by Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I certainly agree with Mr. Savage. In Quebec, over 1500 organizations have written to the minister, and they represent millions of people. These organizations have used student services during the summer and they also represent students. We have had an opportunity to hold press conferences with organizations in almost all the ridings represented by the Bloc. Forty organizations and students accompanied me to a press conference and testified about the value of this program. If any program is working well and achieving its objectives, it is certainly this one. A government study done when the Liberal Party was in power said that the program was meeting 95 per cent of its objectives.

It should be remembered that there are three objectives. First, to give students an opportunity to acquire work experience. Second, to allow students to earn some money to pay for their education. Third, to immediately start looking for areas of interest to them with a view to their future employment. This is quite a wonderful result. A number of students who came with us to the press conference said how helpful the program had been to them.

We must bear in mind what I just said. In the space of three weeks, 1500 organizations have written to the minister, and I have copies of these letters. The motion put forward by our colleague, Mr. Martin, comes exactly at the right time. I would have even included a date for a response, because we are in the time period for the calls for tender. Usually, calls for tender take place in December or early January. It is now February, and the calls for tender have not gone out, because even the minister does not know where he will be making the cuts. Once the call for tender goes out, a number of organizations and students will not be able to apply, because the deadlines will be too short. Consequently, it is urgent that we make a decision about this today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I would just point out very quickly, before I go to Mr. Wallace and Ms. Yelich, that Standing Order 109 does provide the reporting mechanism for that, as is in the motion.

Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Mike Wallace: When I reread the first part, that's what I was going to say, that it's redundant. I'm really concerned about the word "implement". I know from a year's experience now that not everything that gets passed at committee ends up being implemented by the government; there are decision-making processes for that to happen. But I think for the credibility of the committee, the word "implement" is inappropriate in this case. The first paragraph of this motion actually covers off what is intended in the second piece, in terms of dealing with the summer career placement program.

I think there are other speakers, and I'm willing to listen to what they have to say, but my recommendation to the group here is that they remove that paragraph, or at least the implementation part, and make it lot more palatable to everyone.

The Chair: Okay, so are you moving a motion, Mr. Wallace?

Mr. Mike Wallace: No.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I just want to make a comment. I think they have to know that the minister is very concerned about the career placement program. The members across who spoke about this should be jubilant about it, because the minister has responded in the House by saying these are hot economies and that we're not going to give the companies money to have students. So I think they should be quite comfortable with that.

I just think it wouldn't achieve much, as it's redundant. I think the minister is getting his head around this right now. I think we should give him a little bit of time and let him respond by delivering the program they are so anxiously awaiting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Martin.

• (1730)

Mr. Tony Martin: Just briefly, some history.... This report was passed in the previous Parliament, and all of the Conservatives on that side were completely in favour of the word "implement",

thinking it was a great idea at the time. Now they're on the other side, I guess that changes things a little bit, or whatever.

I've heard from students across the country on this. In fact, I was in your backyard, Mr. Chair, just last week, at Brock University, where the president of the student union at Brock came specifically to me to say bring this message back to the government: don't cut the summer career student program, as it's what we count on to be able to make it through the year with the little bit of money we have, and given the escalating cost of education these days.

To suggest, for example, that there are some areas in the country that are hotter than others and that we're not going to put money into them in some ways actually belies the truth. I was in Calgary, the hottest city in the country, and the poverty existing there is alarming—actually, frightening. There are lots of students there who could benefit from this program.

Anyway, I just hope the government is listening and will reverse their decision to cut the \$55 million.

The Chair: Okay. If there is no more discussion, I will call the vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I want to note that there are motions that we need to discuss tomorrow. They've been handed out. These are routine motions, so have a look at them, and we will discuss them tomorrow.

The meeting is adjourned.

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