



House of Commons
CANADA

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

HUMA • NUMBER 063 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

—
Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

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

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

• (1540)

[English]

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

I would like to take time to thank all our witnesses for being here today as we get back to trying to finish off our employability study. We had some legislation that took a little precedence. You may have heard of Bill C-257. That took some time out of our schedule, so we're back at trying to work at finishing off the employability study. I want to thank you for all being very flexible with your schedules and being able to reschedule and come back to see us here in March.

Each group will get seven minutes for their opening comments. We'll start with one round of seven minutes each, and then we'll have a second round of five minutes, and hopefully if we have time, a third round of five minutes as well.

Why don't we just get started? We'll start with Mr. Badger and Mr. Laws from the Canadian Meat Council.

Welcome, gentlemen. You have seven minutes.

Mr. James Laws (Executive Director, Canadian Meat Council): Thank you very much. I'll start off for the two of us.

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you very much for allowing us to speak to you this afternoon.

As was mentioned, the presentation you have in front of you we prepared and submitted back in September. There are a few changes, but we'll highlight those for you.

My name is Jim Laws. I'm the executive director of the Canadian Meat Council here in Ottawa. We are Canada's national trade association of federally inspected meat packers and processors of beef, pork, poultry, veal, and lamb.

The meat processing, packaging, and rendering industry is the largest food processing industry in Canada and the 11th largest manufacturing industry in the country. The industry has annual sales estimated at over \$19.5 billion, and it employs over 67,000 Canadians.

Our members include companies such as Excel Fresh Meats, Cargill Foods, Lakeside Packers, Tyson Foods, Maple Leaf Foods Inc., Olymel, Piller's Sausages and Delicatessens, Quality Meat Packers, and Rancher's Beef.

Working in a meat processing plant is tough work. It's cold. The work is physically demanding, with many tasks accomplished in the standing position. It can be repetitive in nature. Although a lot of technology has changed the processes over the years, there is still a lot of manual labour in the processing of meat. Several of our meat slaughter and processing facilities are in trouble, especially in Alberta. They simply cannot find enough labour to keep the plants running.

Alberta Agriculture recently estimated the current economic loss within the meat industry alone in Alberta to be \$500 million annually. The current shortage of semi-skilled meat-cutting labour in Canada is causing Canadian meat factories to sell their current production in lower form, such as bone-in or untrimmed, than they would if they had more labour.

The labour shortage also causes Canadian meat processing companies to import, for example, partially processed, high-value pork supplies from the United States, much of which originated in Canada, because the Canadian pork factories do not have enough labour to further process the pork to sell to their Canadian customers' high-value specifications.

The other factor is the huge economic potential of added value from processing live animals that are sent to the United States. Approximately eight million pigs and one million cattle are exported annually from Canada to the United States. We estimate the economic loss to Canada for the meat industry to be over \$3 billion annually.

Canadian agriculture was built on immigration. Many of Canada's current producers, in fact, were not born in Canada but have built successful and prosperous farm businesses here in Canada. The same holds true of Canada's food processing sector. Canada's foreign worker program provides that opportunity for our industry to grow.

Thank you very much.

I'll now pass it on to Mr. Badger.

Mr. Gregg Badger (Vice-President, Placement Services, Canadian Meat Council): Thank you, Jim.

My name is Gregg Badger. I'm the chief operating officer and the placement services partner of Ronald A. Chisholm. Chisholm is an associate member of the Canadian Meat Council. Our company has been around since 1938, and we're one of the largest food traders in the country, trading some \$700 million in meat and dairy products around the world.

We recognized some four years ago that our suppliers and customers, the meat processors, were suffering from a lack of labour. Labour turnover and labour shortage were limiting the value-added activity that is occurring in the meat sector. As Jim mentioned, probably some \$3 billion of value-added is left on the table each year.

Thanks to the temporary low-skilled foreign worker program, this issue has started to be addressed. The industry has made a successful start in securing foreign labour, but there is a lot more labour to come and a lot more to be done to pick up the gap. For example, for a Maple Leaf Foods or an Olymel to start a second shift in Brandon and in Red Deer respectively, they have to hire hundreds of foreign workers, and other plants are in the same boat.

We were very pleased to hear recently from Minister Solberg and Minister Finley. They announced changes to the temporary program, most importantly moving the temporary period from a 12-month period to a 24-month period. This is a huge benefit to the packers and producers and is much appreciated. They've made some other improvements to the program to try to increase processing times by putting applications online, and so on. These will be helpful, but there is still more to be done.

As I say, the 24-month period is a big help; it allows the costs to be amortized over a longer period. But some of the biggest challenges now are in getting these workers into the country in an efficient manner. So in terms of our suggestions of other things we would like to see happen, the top of the list would be better coordination, which I know is being worked on, but there needs to be more coordination between Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Service Canada, and HRSDC to facilitate work permit applications and approvals, both in Canada and abroad.

Citizenship and Immigration needs to be more in tune with the process, more involved, not only in creating approvals but in assisting in the enforcement of the rules of the program set out by HRSDC. There have been improvements, but there can still be more consistency among Service Canada and HRSDC offices across the country in terms of the application of the rules of the program and especially in processing times.

In Alberta, for example, it takes upward of 12 weeks for an employer to get an approval, and it can often take longer. Then when employees apply overseas, they're looking at anywhere from six weeks to four months, depending on the embassy. So that means that an employer that makes a decision to hire is waiting anywhere from a minimum of three to six to nine months before workers hit their plant. That means lost productivity as that time goes on. So increased resources and increased coordination between HRSDC and Citizenship and Immigration are important.

Some other matters in our material are more administrative in nature. The other major issue employers would like to see is limiting HRSDC to the job description, working hours, and wages, leaving out matters such as airfare and some other requirements that are in the program that make it more of a burden on the employer than it needs to be. Employers have to spend a lot of time and resources to go abroad and hire workers; they don't think additional burdens are fair.

We see that \$51 million is allocated in the budget, and we hope that gets allocated mostly to resources for better processing times.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badger.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Prost.

Mr. Prost, for seven minutes, please, sir.

Mr. Alar Prost (President, Innovera Integrated Solutions): Thank you, and good afternoon.

My name is Alar Prost. I am the president of Innovera Integrated Solutions, which is a research and consulting firm that develops employment programs that target people with disabilities and aboriginal peoples. We also do a considerable amount of research on employment issues related to these two target groups.

I'm also representing the Canadian Abilities Foundation from Toronto, which is an organization that provides some services, primarily information services, to people with disabilities. For well over a decade now it has been publishing the Canadian *Abilities* magazine, a lifestyle magazine for people with disabilities.

The reason I'm here today is to speak about the situation that people with disabilities face in the employment field, and more specifically about a study we undertook a couple of years back in collaboration with the Canadian Abilities Foundation. The study was called *Neglected or Hidden*. We attempted to find the reason that people with disabilities and employers were not connecting.

I've been in this field for well over 20 years, and I have heard the story over and over again. The people with disabilities are saying employers are not interested in hiring them, and employers in turn are saying they can't find people with disabilities, even if they want to hire them.

About three or four years ago we launched a training program targeting people with disabilities that confirmed exactly this. We worked with employers to develop a training program that met their needs and launched a program in five centres across the country, with 50 positions available.

My exposure to the number of organizations that serve people with disabilities in Canada tells me there are at least 550 organizations out there. We expected to be inundated with applications, because the jobs were guaranteed for those trainees who successfully completed the training. Instead we had 89 applications for 50 positions. It was a frustrating situation for us. The jobs were waiting, and we couldn't find the people with disabilities, even when we knew where to look for them.

We set about to find out why employers are not able to find people with disabilities and why people with disabilities are not responding to employers' solicitations. The study involved 1,245 people with disabilities. They responded in telephone interviews or online or with mail-in responses to a very extensive questionnaire; it was 14 pages. It took anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and a half to complete over the phone. About 66% of the respondents to our study had some post-secondary education. We also spoke with, or met directly with, over 50 employment services providers that specifically target people with disabilities. That comes to roughly 10% of the service providers in Canada. Finally, we also interviewed well over 50 employers to get their perspectives on this issue.

Interestingly, in spite of the tens of millions of dollars that have been provided to employment services providers across the country over the last few decades—and we are talking tens of millions of dollars—it basically shows that the most effective approach for people with disabilities in terms of finding employment turns out to be friends and contacts in the industry. The last on the list, in terms of usefulness of services, is job fairs. I thought I would throw that in.

We have tonnes of statistics that came out of the study, as this package will attest, and I'd like to share some of the more interesting findings with you today.

In essence, 70% of the people with disabilities were telling us that employers are indeed reluctant to hire them. They feel that employers need to provide more flexible working conditions and certainly need to make workplace accommodation available to them.

• (1550)

Employers tended to agree in many respects that, yes, they know there are those employers out there who have a negative attitude toward people with disabilities, and who certainly leave the impression that employers are not particularly interested in hiring people with disabilities. But when we finished the study, we certainly came to the conclusion that while the interested employers are in a minority in Canada, there are certainly sufficient numbers of them that, given the right programs and the right services available to the stakeholders, we wouldn't have an unemployment problem for people with disabilities in Canada. There are certainly many employers who are ready, willing, and able to hire people with disabilities.

What employers did tell us—and this was also confirmed by service providers and people with disabilities—was that they really lack the recruiting and integration experience, and that they often believe that people with disabilities have very limited skills and abilities. This is a stereotypical issue, in that unless an employer is willing to take the plunge and hire people with disabilities, that attitude isn't going to necessarily change.

Employers certainly admitted to us that they do not know where to find qualified people with disabilities, and seldom do they even reach out to service providers in their community. There is certainly a need, then, to increase awareness of disability issues in the employer community, as well as to help employers to be more forthcoming and open with workplace accommodation.

In terms of people with disabilities or labour force participants with disabilities, it certainly became clear to us that there are many

qualified people with disabilities, but they still need to improve their employment preparation, particularly in the soft skills area. When people with disabilities have been taking training, they have tended to take training that interests them rather than training that employers need and in the skill sets that employers need.

We interviewed people, for example, who had spent thousands of dollars—and this is personal money that's spent—taking training in aroma therapy. There aren't many positions available for aroma therapists in Canada, but there have to be over 40,000 positions for truck drivers. Not all people with disabilities can be truck drivers, but a good portion of them can, and there's a desperate shortage in that field in Canada.

• (1555)

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Prost, but we're going to have to move on. I gave you a little bit of extra time, but we'll have to try to cover that in some of the questions.

Mr. Alar Prost: That's fine. I'll try it in the next five minutes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prost.

We're going to move to Mr. Halstrom and Mr. Fefergrad.

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad (Registrar, Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, Canadian Dental Association): It's Mr. Fefergrad and Dr. Halstrom.

The Chair: Thank you very much, gentlemen. You have seven minutes, please.

Dr. Wayne Halstrom (President, Canadian Dental Association): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Wayne Halstrom. I'm the president of the Canadian Dental Association, and I welcome the opportunity to speak to you today about employability and human resources in dentistry.

I am joined at the table, as you have heard, by Mr. Irwin Fefergrad, the registrar of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario, who will share some of his thoughts on these issues following my remarks.

I would like to begin by addressing the issue of how foreign credentials are recognized in Canada. I imagine that for government there are two main pressure points. One is the apparent shortage of medical personnel in some fields, and the second is the population of foreign-trained professionals themselves.

On the first point, in dentistry we are fortunate that we are not currently experiencing major manpower shortages. Except in a few remote areas, most patients are able to readily see a dentist if they need to. Looking down the road a decade or two, we may have some challenges with the aging population of the profession, but fortunately we have enough lead time to deal with these concerns preventively.

On the second point, we recognize that it is important for foreign-trained professionals to have a good sense of the certification process before they decide to come to Canada. The Canadian Dental Association has made this information available through its website for several years, and we are happy to provide specific information to foreign-trained dentists who inquire.

In considering possible changes to the recognition of foreign credentials, one thing is paramount: we cannot compromise patient safety or Canadian standards of care. In fact, the concern is far more far-reaching than standards of care; it also includes appropriateness of care, which includes important cultural and language issues. This by no means suggests that we are unwilling to look for ways to make the process more understandable and smoother, and if appropriate, less time-consuming. However, this must be achieved in a way that maintains the appropriate care that our patients deserve and expect.

How do we know that practising professionals are meeting the high standard that Canadians expect? In dentistry, we have ensured this through a solid, four-part process of education, accreditation, certification, and licensure. This process ensures that licensed Canadian dentists have the training and skills that are needed to deliver safe and effective dental care. Education is delivered at 10 dental schools across Canada. The schools offer either DDS or DMD programs that are equivalent general practice degrees. Many also offer specialty programs in one or more of the nine recognized Canadian dental specialties. As well, a number of universities offer qualifying programs or degree completion programs. These programs were created specifically to meet the needs of the foreign-trained dentists in order to assist them in integrating into Canadian dentistry.

The limited available positions are allotted to candidates on a competition basis, drawing in large part on their scores on an eligibility exam. There is a similar procedure for Canadian students who complete dental aptitude tests as part of their admission requirements to dental schools. They must compete against other students for the finite seats in dentistry.

When we speak of accreditation in dentistry, we're talking about it at the institutional level, not at the level of individual dentists. The Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, or CDAC, is responsible for accrediting all dental and dental hygiene programs, as well as some of the dental assisting programs.

Accreditation is a lengthy, involved, and expensive process that requires regular site visits and considerable expense. CDAC has a reciprocal agreement with the American Dental Association. As a result, schools accredited by one are also recognized by the other. Graduation from an accredited program, be it a program leading to a DS or a DMD in Canada or the U.S., or one of the qualifying programs, is required prior to certification.

Certification of general dentists is done through the National Dental Examining Board of Canada, and as the name suggests, it's national in scope. The NDEB has undergone extensive changes in its processes over the last few years in order to achieve a system of examination that is fair and effective and that is recognized as one of the best worldwide. It is accepted as a basis for licensure by all provincial regulatory authorities for dentistry in Canada, which allows NDEB-certified dentists to apply for licensure in any

province without having to undergo further testing of their qualifications.

● (1600)

Dental specialists, such as orthodontists or periodontists, are certified by the Royal College of Dentists of Canada. An NDEB certificate is required prior to certification as a specialist, which brings me to licensure.

As I mentioned, each province has a dental regulatory authority that licenses and regulates all general dentists and specialists in that province. In addition to licensure, these bodies are also responsible for the maintenance of quality assurance programs and for investigating complaints about dentists and taking appropriate action. Continuing education is an ongoing component of dental licensure, in order to keep dentists current as the profession develops.

This four-part system effectively ensures the ongoing monitoring of the way Canadian dentists practise, from their entry into the dental program all the way through to their retirement.

In terms of entry to the profession, I want to bring your attention to our concerns about the costs of dental education. Because of a number of factors, the tuition fees in dentistry are the highest of all professional programs in this country.

The Chair: There is one minute left.

Dr. Wayne Halstrom: Primarily this is owing to institutional underfunding of dental programs, which necessitates high student fees. Dentistry is simply a very expensive program to operate. Our concern is ultimately the sticker shock of tuition fees that are in the neighbourhood of \$32,000 a year. This could drive some qualified applicants away from choosing a career in dentistry.

For instance, the projected cost of a four-year degree in dentistry at the University of British Columbia is \$171,000. Intuitively, we feel that this may be a particular barrier for some groups—for example, rural students—and may affect the long-term composition of the profession. Based on the fact that dental school clinics provide a much-needed community service with lower-cost treatment, there is a strong argument for increased funding to these schools. As it now stands, dental students are effectively subsidizing access to dental care.

Finally, the one remaining issue I wish to address with you has to do with team delivery of dental care. There are a variety of options as to how much direct access to varying levels of dental care is appropriate. I think there is a compelling argument to be made that dentistry has had it right for some time. With the introduction of dental hygienists and other allied dental personnel a few years ago, we were able to attach and achieve a high level of efficiency in dentistry. It ensures the highest standards of patient care and maximizes the impact of each provider as that care is delivered.

By having all of these services together under one roof, a patient is able to have preventive services, full diagnostic assessment, x-rays and testing as needed, and full treatment, without the need for travel or efficiencies or duplicate examinations and assessments. Historically this approach has also proven to be very safe.

In closing, I guess my take-home message is that we feel we have a lot to be proud of in dentistry.

I will now, for the next five minutes, turn the microphone over to Mr. Fefergrad, because I believe I've exhausted my seven minutes.

The Chair: You've done that and some of his as well.

Anyway, you only have seven minutes. We'll have to get to you maybe through some of the questions, Mr. Fefergrad. I apologize for that. We're going to move on, because we have a pretty tight schedule today.

Mr. Garcia-Orgales, please. Sir, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales (Researcher, Canadian National Office, United Steelworkers): I thank you for the opportunity to appear in this committee on this study.

I represent the steelworkers union. We have 280,000 members in Canada. These members work in a large variety of sectors of the economy including forestry, steel, mining, construction, trucking, post-secondary education, and a large number of service sectors.

The committee is interested in looking at employability issues, and I will be addressing those very shortly. But first I would like to give a bit of context on where we are coming from to address these issues.

First, employability has a bit of a "blame the victim" ring for us. When you talk about employability, you understand that something is missing in the person who is looking for a job to be able to get a good job. Something is missing individually—the person doesn't have the education that is needed, or something else has something to do with that. Perhaps the person was trained in another country and there isn't a good recognition process for them. In both cases, it sounds as if it's not the economic system we have, it's not the employer we have; it's the worker's individual situation. So employability sounds as if we are blaming them for that lack of something.

The other thing I want to talk about is the issue of opportunities. I again thank the committee for looking at the issue of employability. It's a good idea and the intentions are good, but I'm not sure you are addressing the real question. The real question is not necessarily lack of employability in the system; the real question is whether there are good jobs available. I want to give you some examples of this.

Unemployment in December in Canada was at 6.1%, and in the budget that was presented on Monday, Minister Flaherty said that unemployment in Canada was at its lowest level in the last 30 years. Are they good jobs? I want to say no. Most of the jobs created are in the service sector, and lots of them are part-time jobs.

Currently 13%, or close to 1.7 million workers, are working in temporary situations doing contract, seasonal, casual, or agency work. In 1989, one in ten new hires was a temporary worker. Right now the ratio is five to one in the number of workers who do not have full-time jobs. Two million Canadians work in poverty situations. They put in 40 hours a week but don't even reach the poverty line.

Of Canadians tax filers, 59% report incomes of less than \$30,000. People who constitute the second-largest group of food bank users

are employees. They are working but cannot provide food for their families. Undocumented workers are continuously growing, especially in the sectors of construction and caregiving. Temporary workers have all kinds of limitations when they come to Canada. We hear from our friends in the meat-packing system that they need workers, but they still bring them in on a temporary basis.

You can see from these few examples that there are jobs available in Canada, but they are not good, decent jobs with good pay and good working conditions. If you only address the issue of employability without attaching the need for a good national economic policy that guarantees good jobs, you are just subsidizing the employer and allowing the continuation of these low-pay, low-quality jobs in Canada.

Let's move quickly to the issue you are interested in of skills training. Employers are claiming that Canada is close to having a skills shortage crisis. Supposedly, skills shortage now ranks among the top five concerns of employers, and half of private sector managers are reporting occupational shortages or anticipating shortages within the next two years. We believe this is a typical cry from employers. They want more skilled workers, but they do not want to pay for them.

• (1605)

Canada slipped from 12th place in 2002 to 20th place in 2004 in terms of the priority employers place on training employees. Fewer than 30% of adult workers in Canada aged 25 to 64 participated in informal, job-related education and training in 2002, compared to 34% in the UK, 41% in Switzerland, 44% in United States, and so on.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: I have only two minutes? Oh, man!

The Chair: You have seven minutes in total.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: The current government seems to agree with the idea that employers should do more on training. They say that in their budget.... I will be passing a submission to the committee later. The budget mentions that employers need to provide more training for their workers. We agree with the need for spending more money on training, and we have two suggestions, or ideas, on how to do this.

First is the idea of a training levy, like the one the Province of Quebec has, in which 1% has to be allocated for training, and if not, it goes to fund a system managed by employers and unions. A second model is matched funding. Any investment in training by the federal government or the province would have to be matched by the employer in some kind of formula to guarantee that employers pay for the training of their workers.

I want to quickly mention the issue of literacy and foundation skills. I don't need to mention to you all the numbers that say we need literacy training in this country or that literacy training is completely linked to productivity and the economic growth of the country.

I want to mention just three points that we want the committee to consider on literacy and foundation skills. First, funding has to be allocated, and it has to be allocated specifically for this reason, not just as part of a general training package. And those funds have to be directed to the public education system. English and French as a second language should be considered as an important part. We want a coordinated and integrated approach between the public school system, the employers, and the union to design and deliver these programs.

I see that you are wanting to cut me off, and I will have to come back later to some of the questions.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garcia-Orgales. All I can assure you is that if it is tough for you for seven minutes, you can imagine how difficult it is for the politicians to stay to seven and five minutes. It is just as much fun.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: Some people would say that we are also politicians.

The Chair: All right, we're going to move to our last presenter.

I want to welcome Ms. Lysack. You have seven minutes, please.

Ms. Monica Lysack (Executive Director, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada): Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'm Monica Lysack. I'm the executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of the Canada. The CCAAC commends the committee for undertaking this study of critical employability issues.

I'm here today to discuss the links between employability and child care, and specifically how child care supports the employability of parents while at the same time helping provide children with the foundations for lifelong health, learning, and skill development.

This discussion is especially important today given the recent budget announcement that fails to move Canada closer to the universally accessible quality child care program that the CCAAC advocates. Though the budget was prefaced as a choice to support hard-working families, the lack of accountable funding for quality child care lets these families down and misses an opportunity to tackle employability issues. Accountable child care funding would have provided tremendous support to families by supporting parents, particularly women, to maintain and increase their labour force attachments.

I did some rough calculations this morning on the \$250 million announced in the CST transfer in the budget, and I'd like you to know that we should have universal child care in about 107 years at this rate, with this government's policies. You can look forward to reading that upcoming publication.

Canada's productivity relies on working mothers with young children, who contribute \$53 billion annually to Canada's GDP. That reliance is only increasing due to widely predicted shortages of skilled labour. Yet Canada has not built a network of income supports and public services, such as quality affordable child care, to broadly facilitate women's economic and social contribution. As a result, mothers are most likely to refuse work, promotions, or transfers because of family responsibilities.

When Canadian families do not have access to quality care, our labour force and our employability suffer. With women now the majority in virtually all university programs, decreased labour force attachment among mothers exacerbates skilled worker shortages. Not only must parents decrease their labour force attachment in the short term when there are no other viable child care options, but their future employability is also affected when they miss education, professional development, and advancement opportunities.

In addition to supporting the employability of their parents, child care provides children with the foundations for lifelong health, learning, and skill development, all related to their future employability. There's extensive, clear research showing that the early years, from birth to age six, set the foundation for school readiness, for literacy, lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. All children benefit from early learning and child care, not just targeted groups of children, and all parents can use information and support to help them raise healthy, well-adjusted, and resilient human beings.

What makes the case for universal, publicly supported, quality, accessible child care so compelling and so relevant to the issue of employability is that it meets the needs of children and parents. This explains why multiple studies show that the benefits of a universal child care system outweigh the costs by a factor of two to one, not including additional benefits for children at risk. So for every dollar invested, there's an economic return of at least \$2.

Further, the committee has identified the mobility of the Canadian labour force as an important issue, and here again, child care has a role to play. Like schools and libraries, child care helps to build places in which citizens want to live and work. It helps provide a welcome to new residents from both outside and within the country and supports their participation in a new community. When child care is not adequately supported in all provinces and regions, families may be reluctant to make otherwise desirable moves or, alternatively, will seek transfers when it would otherwise have made sense to stay.

Finally, the committee has heard deputations about issues related to older workers. Sometimes grandparents provide child care for their families; however, as the Canadian population ages and workers stay in the labour force longer, there is likely to be even greater need for publicly funded, community-based child care.

It is extremely unfortunate, however, that just as the critical need for child care intensifies, public funding is disappearing. As discussed in the CCAAC's submission to the 2007 pre-budget consultation committee, the federal government has terminated bilateral agreements that committed \$1.2 billion annually in dedicated funding to improve child care services. These agreements have been replaced with transfers to the provinces and territories of \$250 million annually, with accountability yet to be discussed. This represents an annual funding cut for child care of \$950 million, or 79%.

•(1615)

This committee and indeed all Canadians have reason for concern. In order to capture the numerous benefits of public child care investments, including the employability benefits described above, the federal government must make a more significant commitment. The CCAAC calls on the government to adopt the following focused investment strategy—two quick, easy things.

One, restore and increase sustained long-term federal funding to the provinces and territories. Federal transfers must be specifically dedicated to improving and expanding child care services, based on provincial and territorial commitments to advance quality, inclusion, and affordability.

The second thing is to enact federal child care legislation that recognizes the principles of a pan-Canadian child care system, makes the federal government accountable to Parliament with respect to child care funding and policy, and respects the right of Quebec and first nations to establish their own child care systems.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to get started with the opposition.

Ms. Dhalla, seven minutes, please.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Thank you very much to all of our presenters.

My question is actually for you, Ms. Lysack, on some of the points you raised.

We've done a lot of work on trying to ensure that parents have the opportunity to ensure that when they do decide to work, their children are going to be cared for. When we talk about employability, I think it's very important to mention and also discuss the employability of women across the country and mothers across the country. We know that their participation in the workforce is not at the rate and percentage it should be. Research around the world—you're probably going to agree with me on this—has connected the importance of investing in early learning and child care and also ensuring the success of not only the children but Canadian families.

We know that the Conservatives have put forward a \$100 benefit that is taxable. Now that families are filling out their tax forms, they're realizing that they're going to have to give back to the government. So some families are ending up with some amounts as low as perhaps \$50 to \$60 a month.

Can you please tell us, since we are taking a look at the issue of employability, the impact that this \$100 a month, which is taxable, is going to have on the employability of women entering the workforce, or wanting to enter the workforce?

Ms. Monica Lysack: I think it's important to note that overall the \$100-a-month payment is actually punitive to working mothers. In other words, the least benefit is derived by two-parent families where both parents are in the workforce. The greatest benefit is reaped by those with a parent who stays at home.

I am certainly not the expert on these calculations, but I'm sure you're familiar with the Caledon Institute's very thorough analysis of this. It's of great concern.

As well, we're hearing over and over again—I get letters and e-mails from parents almost daily on this—that this \$100 a month is of no use to them when they can't find child care. We have to remember it's not just a matter of paying for child care, it's a matter of accessing it. We have enough child care spaces in Canada for about 20% of the children. Eight out of ten children in Canada do not have access to the child care that their parents want for them. This \$100 does nothing for that.

•(1620)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I note that within your presentation, you made some recommendations to perhaps increase employability of women participating in the workforce. Could you please elaborate on some of those suggestions for us?

Ms. Monica Lysack: We need to look no further than Quebec to see the impact that a good, solid child care system can have on women's employability. I'm not sure exactly of the numbers—I could certainly look those up—but the analysis of the impact of the Quebec child care system showed us that they went from having the lowest participation of mothers in the workforce to having a significant increase in a very short period of time. I think it was something like from 61% or 62% to 67% or 69%. So it's really significant.

I think what's important to recognize about that is that it is by choice. When women don't have good support, and good family supports to help them with their family responsibilities, they are not able to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. So I think it's critical that we look at that impact of what child care can do for working mothers.

I'll just add a little anecdote about the province of Alberta, where there are critical labour force shortages and where they have vacant day care spaces. You might wonder why that is. One child care director told me that one of her ECE's left at lunchtime for her lunch break and didn't come back in the afternoon because she was offered a new position at the restaurant where she went for lunch. She would be making almost double the money she was at the child care centre. So they can't even employ the caregivers to care for the children because the system is so under-resourced.

It's not just a matter of investing capital or anything like that to create spaces. We have to go with a system of supporting provinces and territories to build and sustain a system of child care.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Thank you very much.

I'd now like to address Mr. Halstrom and perhaps Mr. Garcia-Orcales. You had spoken about the importance of foreign credential recognition. We know from looking at the statistics that immigrants are going to continue to be significant in the demographics of the country, and therefore we must ensure that they're able to fill job positions.

One of the issues I've worked on since being elected is the issue of foreign credential recognition and ensuring that we had a secretariat and a centralized federal government agency that would be able to coordinate and collaborate with the provinces, with regulatory bodies and other stakeholders, to ensure that the average new citizen would be able to get access to the resources that they needed.

The Conservatives had spoken about the credentialing agency, and we've unfortunately seen that it wasn't mentioned in this new budget. Perhaps it's been eliminated. What type of impact does not having a centralized body to coordinate and collaborate with all the necessary stakeholders have on your respective professions and on your particular network?

Dr. Wayne Halstrom: Well, at the moment, as I outlined in my presentation, we have a very extensive credentialing program that is made available to any and all foreign-credentialed people coming to the country. Certainly the profession is ready, willing, and able to work with any agency that is put forth to make that more efficient and more accessible.

The issue is whether or not it is going to set back any of the issues that we have in place at the moment. We feel we're in good shape, and we would encourage and welcome any help that we can get.

I would ask Mr. Fefergrad to comment as well.

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad: Thank you very much.

I represent the regulator side of things. We are governed in each province by provincial statute in the public interest. Dentistry is a great news story when it comes to reducing barriers to those who are foreign-trained. For one thing, we have a national labour mobility agreement so that a dentist from Newfoundland could go anywhere across the country to practise.

As well, on February 16, 17, and 18 in Toronto we held a national summit to try to address how we are able to reduce barriers to foreign-trained. We came up with a national memorandum of understanding that has as its hallmark a plan that is fair and flexible and that protects the public by maintaining standards. It's a national program, so that in each province, no matter where a foreign-trained applicant applies, his or her credentialing will be reviewed in a consistent, fair way. The program they will eventually get into is tailor-made to their own education from the foreign-trained jurisdiction.

So there is a really good news story coming out of dentistry nationally for Canada and for foreign-trained applicants.

•(1625)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Dhalla.

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

[*Translation*]

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

I want to thank our witnesses for having come here to discuss this very important issue. We do not have much time and I would like to put at least one question to each of you. I would ask you to take no

more than one minute for your answers and I think that will be possible because my questions will be short.

My first question is for the Canadian Meat Council. The representative of the United Steelworkers talked about working conditions. Do you believe that working conditions are a factor in the hiring difficulties that employers face at this time?

I will ask all my questions now which will give you some time to think about your answers.

I see that your foreign workers come mainly from the Philippines, China and Salvador, where salaries are low.

My second question is about persons with disabilities. The problem that you have explained is well-known. I have been active in this field for more than thirty years and I have kept abreast of developments. Your finding is the same as mine, which is that it is difficult to match exactly work requirements with the problems faced by persons with disabilities.

However, is this not a case where employers are reluctant to create jobs for those persons? I believe that this shows some lack of will because, if not, it would be possible to resolve this matter. I always come to the same conclusion.

My next question is for the representatives of the Canadian Dental Association. I see that hiring is not an issue for you in Canada generally, except that there are some difficulties in rural areas. You would like to resolve this problem by providing more financial support to training aimed at people who want to live in rural areas.

Do you not think that a better solution would be to ensure a better regional allocation of dental professionals? Do you understand my question?

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad: Perhaps but...

Mr. Yves Lessard: I will come back to this later on and you will then be able to provide a more detailed answer.

The representative of the United Steelworkers has stated that working conditions have deteriorated. That is also my opinion. At the beginning of the nineties, the ratio of part-time jobs or precarious jobs was one out of ten whereas today it is five out of ten. You are the Union and I am myself was a union member in the past.

Do you not think that unions are partly responsible? Is the role of unions not to make sure that workers have good working conditions and that those of conditions do not deteriorate? This is not a trick question but, if you come to the same conclusion... What do you think unions could do, in the present context, to correct this situation? It seems to me that unions have a role to play here.

I now want to speak to the representatives of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. What you said is quite true: if we want more women to have jobs, we definitely need a strong system of child care services. Is your Association representative enough of the national context to express a common position aimed at putting pressure on the government for setting up such a system? We could talk about this issue for a very long time but we all know what needs to be done. It is a matter of wanting to do it or not. What could we do to make the government want to do it? Setting up the system would not be very complicated.

I'm sorry to have asked many questions but I would like each of you to answer in no more than one minute. I know this may be difficult but I would appreciate it.

• (1630)

Mr. James Laws: I will answer the first question. It is quite obvious that working conditions in slaughterhouses and meat processing plants are difficult. It is a cold environment and the work is mainly manual, is repetitive and is done standing up. We are all quite aware of that but, unfortunately, there's not a lot of equipment yet to replace those workers. We try to rotate the tasks every hour, people take coffee breaks and have comfortable clothing, etc. Yes, it is a challenge but that is the reality. If we want meat to be preserved for a long time, it has to be processed at the coldest temperature possible.

Mr. Yves Lessard: For example, are salaries and benefits competitive with those of industry?

Mr. James Laws: If you don't pay your employees, you lose them. The challenge is enormous, especially in Alberta. We compete with the whole world. If you pay too much, you won't be able to sell your product.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lessard, you have 30 seconds left. You'll have to pick your favourite.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Let's continue in order and I will come back later to the second witness to whom I put a question.

[English]

Mr. Alar Prost: I certainly agree with you that the majority of employers have demonstrated a lack of will to hire people with disabilities, but as I mentioned in the earlier part of my presentation, there are lots of employers willing to hire people with disabilities, they just don't seem to know how to make the connections. That's what our study showed.

The weakest link is not necessarily people with disabilities and employers, but from our study the weakest link seems to be the employment services providers that people with disabilities depend on to help them find jobs. The employers don't know who these organizations are, and the organizations haven't necessarily made the connections with employers.

We have lots of suggestions in terms of how these employment services providers could improve their services.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Prost.

Dr. Wayne Halstrom: Mr. Chair, if Mr. Lessard would like some replies to his questions, are we able to provide them in writing through you?

The Chair: Most definitely, and we'll have them translated.

Mr. Lessard will have another round, so you'll probably get a chance to look at that.

We're going to move to Madame Savoie for seven minutes please.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Thank you.

In order not to run out of time, I'll go one person, one group at a time.

Thank you very much, everybody, for your presentations and different perspectives of a problem we're all very concerned about.

I was in my riding in the past couple of weeks, and some forums were held around child care. I was appalled and troubled by the stories parents told. Some had their child wait-listed at 11 child care centres, and there were just no spaces. One young couple was paying \$925 for their child, and the cost was going up by \$50 to \$975. That's the price of an apartment.

During this study, we heard an employer association—I think it was in Quebec or Halifax—make the comparison with statistics between the number of women per capita who are employed in Quebec compared to Alberta, where there's a hue and cry about the skills shortage. Certainly they can't be employed in the meats, and I doubt there are very many women who would want to work there—but maybe not; I shouldn't be sexist and make those assumptions. However, there is a clear link, as you pointed out, between employability and good quality day care.

As you probably know, I introduced a bill in the House on early learning and child care that would ensure long-term stable funding for quality day care. I hope it will be coming to this committee soon. I'm hoping that my colleagues will get this through the committee quickly, because it did pass at second reading. I think it's something we need to move forward with. I certainly hope to get their support.

Going back to what the government has committed—and you were saying it would take 107 years to meet the needs—what will \$250 million give us in terms of day care spaces at the moment? Can you estimate in terms of meeting some of the needs?

• (1635)

Ms. Monica Lysack: I'm happy to address that. I will address your first comment and answer Monsieur Lessard's question at the same time.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Oh, that's not fair.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: All right.

[English]

Ms. Monica Lysack: It's the same answer.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Okay, but he'll have to support my bill.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Monica Lysack: Yes, we're working on that.

There is outrage all across the country, and particularly in your home province of British Columbia, where parents are feeling those cuts because government sort of pre-empted any budget announcement and started making cuts. Families are just outraged, and so we're seeing actions all over the province, like none of us who have been working in this field for many years have ever seen before.

I think that is why it is so critical to have a piece of legislation that actually protects and contributes to long-term development, and that child care doesn't continue to be a matter of luck—we might have a government that supports it, and we might have a government that doesn't support it. It has to be protected in legislation so we can continue to move forward.

In terms of what \$250 million will buy, this government, I think, went into the whole child care arena with a very naive assumption about it. They talked initially about \$250 million buying 25,000 spaces, and they were multiplying that by a commitment over five years. That was only the capital. They dropped that whole tax incentive deal because they heard loud and clear, immediately, that businesses were not interested in that. But that was only the capital.

In the first year, if that \$250 million were used to create 25,000 spaces...and it is questionable whether it could do that, but even if it did, in the second year the additional \$250 million, with the 3% escalator that's been built into the transfer, would only maintain the first spaces that were built. It wouldn't create any more new spaces.

So right now in the city of Ottawa, where they have a centralized waiting list, there are 10,000 children in this city alone waiting for child care. The \$250 million this government has committed for this year would barely meet that need, never mind the rest of Canada.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you very much.

I'll move to Mr. Garcia-Orgales.

I think it's fair to say that in your opinion there's no skills shortage. I'm just wondering, from your union, from the steelworkers, whether there are steelworkers who are unemployed. If there are, is it because, as you say, some of the jobs that are available are poorly paid? Do you want to comment on that?

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: Sure. I want to distinguish the skills—

Ms. Denise Savoie: And I wanted to let you finish your other recommendations.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: I want to distinguish between a skilled trades shortage and a skills shortage. There is a need for skilled trades workers.

The Chair: There is one minute left, just to let you know the time.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: There is a need for skilled trades workers. And there is a need for supporting apprenticeships in different ways—and you will see that in our submission—to allow workers to acquire the trade skills needed to work in the workplace.

On the other side, a skills shortage is an educational matter. Canada is number one in the world in educational attainment. Most workers, because of the general knowledge they have, are working in underemployment conditions. We don't understand why employers are not taking better advantage of the knowledge people really have and that they carry into the workplace.

I want to distinguish between those. What we say is that in terms of a skills shortage in educational attainment, we are not in a crisis situation; for skilled trades, we are in a situation in which more and more people are retiring, and new people are not being hired.

I want to quickly attach this to the issue of foreign credentials, because first, many of those trades do not have the same mechanism for recognition that the dentistry college has. Plus, it's not only foreign credentials that they need to recognize; it's also the experience acquired in other countries. Many countries, especially in Latin America, which I'm very familiar with, do not have apprenticeship systems that are regulated like they are here. People learn through other means and get recognized in their jobs by other

means. We should have some mechanism by which we look at the experience people have when they come here, and not only at their credentials, the formal credentials, they acquire in their own countries.

• (1640)

Ms. Denise Savoie: So it's the importance of recognizing prior learning.

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

Ms. Denise Savoie: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: We're going to have to try to get this in during the second round.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Yes, I'll continue in the next round.

The Chair: Ms. Yelich, you have seven minutes, please.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): I'm actually just going to make a comment, and then I'm going to share my time with Mr. Lake. I just wanted to make a comment to the child care advocate, Ms. Lysack.

You talked about cuts to child care, so I would like to set the record straight. Our Conservative government is spending more money on child care than any other government in Canadian history. That is because we are representing 90% of the parents who would prefer to care for their children or have a family member care for their children.

In the 2007-08 budget, we've spent \$5.6 billion in support of early learning and child care, through transfers, direct spending, and tax measures: \$1.1 billion in cash transfers to territories and provinces; \$2.4 billion annually through the universal child care benefit; and \$695 million in recognition of child care expenses through child care expense deductions. Budget 2007 also provides \$1.5 billion per year in tax support for families with children, through the new child tax credit.

I would like to tell the advocate that I think it is not about the money we're spending, but perhaps about your advocacy group. Most parents are very happy with our plan. Of the parents who were polled in *Today's Parent*, only 17% are really looking for the child care option that you're offering.

I will now share my time with Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Thanks, Lynne.

Actually, I'll give you a chance to talk—

The Chair: She's actually making a statement. Mr. Lake will probably ask some questions.

Mr. Mike Lake: Yes, probably.

On October 17, you appeared before us, Ms. Lysack, and I just want to continue the conversation we had then.

One of the questions I asked you at the time was how much money you had received from the Liberal government over the past 13 years. You couldn't answer the question, so I precisely asked you to estimate for the last five years. You said you had received maybe \$500,000. It turns out that over the last five years you have actually only had two projects, so as the executive director, you probably would have known how much funding you had for those. The amount was actually \$985,000 for the two projects due to end in October 2007. The 13-year total for funding that your organization specifically received was \$2.2 million since 1993.

I'm curious, actually, because this leads to a bunch of different questions. For the record, could you tell us what your salary is? That's just a starting point.

Ms. Monica Lysack: Do I have to answer that?

Mr. Mike Lake: You don't have to answer it.

Ms. Monica Lysack: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

We are here to talk about employability and it is the only matter that we have discussed with the witnesses. I am not taking any positions, I am not a member of the Liberal party and I was not behind the previous plan but, in consideration of our guest, I believe that such a question is absolutely out of order.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): On the same point of order—

The Chair: Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: It's delightful to be back with you, visiting the committee.

The Chair: It's good to see you.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you so much.

It seems to me, first of all, that unless Mr. Lake is going to ask the same question of every witness who comes before us, which I think would be atrocious—whether it's one or all, it's still atrocious and inappropriate—I don't understand why he would ask it of one in particular. Most of all, it's an inappropriate question for him to ask.

I don't think he's going to tell us what he has made throughout his life in every job he has had, and we don't expect him to tell us that. If he wants to, that's up to him, but I don't think it's appropriate.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'm speaking to the point of order, so I assume my time is not running.

Of course, any job I've had that has been funded by public taxpayer dollars is on the record in terms of the salary I've had.

My question is being asked on behalf of the 90% of parents who, a Vanier Institute study shows, prefer to care for their children or have a family member care for their children. It's their tax dollars that are paying for her salary—\$2.2 million toward her organization over the 13 years that the Liberals were in government—and I'm asking that question on behalf of them.

Hon. Geoff Regan: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, first of all, over the past year and month or so, it has been a Conservative government in office. Before that, for 12 years and two months...in fact, you'll recall that last November was, in fact, the thirteenth anniversary of the election of the Liberal government. So when the Conservatives had been in power for ten months by then, I don't see what kind of new arithmetic Mr. Lake is engaging in when he concludes that it was 13 years, when in fact it was 12 years and two months. Twelve years and two months is far shy of 13 years. We don't say a child who is 12 years and two months old is 13.

I think we understand that this is nonsense, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We're going to—

Ms. Denise Savoie: I have a point of order. We need an adult in this sandbox.

The Chair: I'm going to stop the points of order. We're going to get back to your line of questioning.

Ms. Lysack, feel free to answer the questions you want to answer.

We're going to go back to Mr. Lake and we're going to start the time where we left off.

Welcome back, Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you.

Mr. Mike Lake: Did you want to answer?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

I do not think this type of question should be allowed. If someone wants to make accusations relating to inappropriate or doubtful use of public funds, it should be done before the Standing Public Accounts Committee, not here.

Our role here is to look at employability and access to jobs. It is also to see if anything can be done to help employers who want to hire new people and to support those who want to provide the best working conditions possible to their workers.

Our job is also to look at the situation of some specific groups of our society such as persons with disabilities, immigrants and native people. We want to see how we can help them to have access to jobs, not through charity but through the appropriate use of their skills. That is the topic of discussion today.

If we want to look into the financial matters of those witnesses who are kind enough to appear before us and to look for weaknesses relating to them, I will not agree at all, Mr. Chairman. Therefore, I want you to accept my point of order and to reject this type of question.

[*English*]

The Chair: So it's okay if the opposition asks political questions, just not the government. Okay, I have that clear.

Let's move forward here.

Ms. Monica Lysack: I am ready to respond.

First, let me say that I think it's very telling when members of a committee ask questions that are deflecting from the real issues, and so—

Mr. Mike Lake: We're not.

Ms. Monica Lysack: I'm happy to answer the question, and that is exactly what I'm doing. When we talk about salaries and funding and so on, we're not really getting at the real issue here, and that is that eight out of ten Canadian children don't have access to quality child care.

Just to clarify the mandate of our organization—

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Chair—

Ms. Monica Lysack: You asked the question.

Mr. Mike Lake: That's not the question that I asked. I asked what your salary was, and if you don't want to answer, just say no. That's okay.

Ms. Monica Lysack: And you also asked about—

Ms. Denise Savoie: On a point of order to that question—

Mr. Mike Lake: I have a certain limited amount of time, and you've had seven minutes to speak already, so now I have specific questions I want to ask.

Ms. Monica Lysack: You did raise the question about the funding for the organization. Would you like me to comment on that?

Mr. Mike Lake: Actually, I asked what your salary was. That is the question I asked.

Ms. Monica Lysack: You prefaced that with a discussion of how much funding our organization has received, and I think there's some clarification required. If you're nervous about hearing the truth, I cannot speak...but I think other members in the room are entitled.

• (1650)

The Chair: I don't think he's worried about that, but anyway, fire away.

Ms. Monica Lysack: Our organization does not receive one cent of core funding. I'm not sure about many, many years ago. I've been involved with the organization for not quite three years. In that time we have actually had three projects, not two, and these are all on a fee-for-service basis.

Much of the voluntary sector takes on work that I think government actually should be doing. A major project that we're funded for, which receives, I think, about \$600,000, is to monitor whether or not government investments in child care are actually being spent on child care.

So this is a role of the federal government, whether it be a Conservative, Liberal, or any other form of government. So I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Mike Lake: I just don't want to use up all the time in terms of my questions.

So you didn't want to answer that question. Can you tell me how many child care spaces your organization has actually created?

Ms. Monica Lysack: Again, the mandate of our organization—and I've said this before in committees—is not to create child care spaces. That is your job as government. Our job—

Mr. Mike Lake: So the answer is zero.

Ms. Monica Lysack: Our job is to critique public policy.

Mr. Mike Lake: Thank you.

I apologize. I just want to get my questions in, and obviously you don't want to answer them.

The Vanier Institute has produced a study that says that 90% of parents prefer to care for their children or have a family member care for their children. I'm just wondering how you advocate for those parents.

Ms. Monica Lysack: Actually, I'm one of those parents. I have three children. I prefer to be their primary caregiver. I am their primary caregiver as their mother. I prefer to have my family and friends involved in their care whenever that's possible, but the reality of my life, like many others, is that this is not always possible. So for those families for whom that is not a possibility or a choice, we advocate for a system of early learning and child care.

Furthermore, the vast majority of families choose early learning experiences for their children, regardless of whether they're employed inside or outside the home and regardless of what their other family arrangements are.

Mr. Mike Lake: So you're basically advocating only for parents who choose to use institutional child care.

Since 2000 your organization has received about \$1.5 million in taxpayers' money. There was \$132,648 of that for a project called "Child Care Advocacy and Canadian Policy Processes: History and Practice from World War II to the Present". Can you explain how that project is going to create child care spaces?

Ms. Monica Lysack: I think you're talking about the history project.

I'm not sure exactly what you're getting at, but again let me clarify. We do not create child care spaces; that's your job, as government. We advocate around public policy and public education. It's on a fee-for-service basis. When the government puts out a call for proposals, we submit... If it's chosen and we're funded, we meet the terms of the agreement and the accountability.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to the second round of five minutes.

Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Ms. Lysack, I'm going to stay with you for a bit. I want to talk about child care and employability.

There are two ways that child care impacts employability in this country. One is providing suitable places for families to have education, development for their youngest children. The other area is in the child care spaces themselves and the people who work in those spaces.

When I look in my community, people like Sue Wolstenholme and Pat Hogan, who have worked in child care for decades, should all get the Order of Canada. They work for almost nothing. They are extraordinarily dedicated people, often going away beyond the call—not only in educating and helping to develop our children, but in other ways as well. These are the people who, in the last couple of years, saw such hope in the Liberal child care plan. One of the ways that money was going to be spent in some provinces was directly on salaries for child care workers so that we could actually provide a decent living wage for the people who help us take care of our children.

I wonder if you would talk specifically about the wages of child care workers in Canada and how the previous plan might have helped to make it a better system.

Ms. Monica Lysack: I think you've raised an incredibly important issue. I did allude to it earlier when I gave the example of the child care worker in Alberta who left to work in a restaurant.

The people who work in this profession feel it's a calling. They do it because they love what they do; they don't do it for the money. And they do it at great personal sacrifice for themselves. Very few early childhood educators have decent salaries, or any kind of pensions or benefits that other people enjoy. While women make, I think, 73¢ on the male dollar, child care workers make, I think, 62¢ on the male dollar. So they're paid even less than other women.

The importance of having an investment strategy that doesn't just create spaces but invests in the infrastructure is that we can then invest in training and salaries and other supports, so we can recognize that important workforce.

•(1655)

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you very much.

To the Canadian Dental Association, it's good to see you again. In my other incarnations on the health committee and the finance committee, the CDA has come before us. They are always well briefed and have good information. The people you use to advocate with us are very effective. I want to congratulate you on that.

I have two questions about dentistry. You mentioned the tuition. The average tuition is \$32,000 a year in Canada. If you're able, I'd like to know how that compares, on average, to other comparable nations such as the United States, OECD nations, and things like that.

The second question is on foreign-trained dentists. Quite often when we bring in foreign-trained doctors we're actually taking them from countries that need them a lot more than we do. Is that an issue with dentists? Would it be an issue as we go forward, if there are shortages?

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad: I guess I'm being asked to answer the second question. I thought you were going to ask what my salary is. I was going to tell you I'm grossly underpaid.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad: In terms of whether we're unethically or immorally soliciting foreign-trained dentists from other jurisdictions, that's not our information. Our information is that it's quite the reverse. There are people who are coming to Canada anyway, who

have credentials, and they want to apply to work here. Unlike medicine, I suspect, that is not our information.

In terms of the tuition, my guess—and it's just a guess—is that our Canadian tuition is lower than the States, but not significantly. There are still a huge number of applicants for the few number of seats available in the dental schools in the country.

Mr. Michael Savage: I'd like to finish on child care, but not with a question.

I'm one of the 90% of the people who would prefer to raise my children myself or have my own family members raise them. I am in the fortunate position, as a member of Parliament, of being able to afford that; most Canadians are not in that position. Wanting to be able to do it and being able to do it are two different things. I don't think the government understands that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Savage.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses.

My first question is for the Canadian Dental Association. I would like to come back to the matter of tuition fees. Even if those fees are higher in US, nobody can deny that they are very high in Canada. I seem to have heard the figure of \$72,000. Are tuition fees different in the various provinces? Having to pay such high tuition fees is an important barrier for anyone wanting to make a career in dental care.

What would you suggest to lower those fees?

[*English*]

Dr. Wayne Halstrom: Thank you very much, Monsieur Bouchard.

The issue of the quantity of money that has to go into creating a dental education is very concerning to us, because if it is only the affluent who can afford to get into these programs, then it is going to change the culture of the profession as we go forward.

In answer to your question about the variability in tuition among universities in the country, I can tell you that it is variable, but it is not significantly variable. If you look at the quote we used, it's \$32,000 a year at the University of British Columbia. We understand, obviously, that there's a cost of living issue in B.C. That's one of the reasons it amounts to \$171,000. That is the figure I used for what a graduate spends on tuition fees.

The tuition fee problem comes from the fact that there is an underfunded circumstance in the universities at large. The student is having to bear the cost of that education, and dental education is extremely expensive. It's expensive from a facility standpoint and it's expensive from a tutorial standpoint. It's going to be expensive to hire these people. We are losing competent educators to other jurisdictions, particularly to the United States, because they offer better benefits and better salaries.

Is there a solution to that problem? Yes. It can be found, as most things are found, in funding. The funding of the universities, unfortunately, has been far behind for a very long time.

I turn to Mr. Fefergrad.

• (1700)

Mr. Irwin Fefergrad: I can't add anything to what Dr. Halstrom said. I think he's got it right on.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Thank you.

My second question is for the United Steelworkers. The number of part-time jobs increases continually. Some time ago, there was one such job out of ten but, today it is one out of five. I have no answer to that.

Is the rate of unionization decreasing in Canada? Who really benefits from the increase of precarious jobs? In the short-term, I believe that employers are the beneficiaries but, in the long run, are they not losers?

[English]

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: On the first question, on the rate of unionization or the numbers of workers who have been unionized, the number of workers has been increasing, but the density or the percentage has been decreasing. At this point in Canada, 32% of unionized workers are doing quite well in unionization in the public sector. In the private sector, especially in industry, it's around 19%. We have been losing members, especially the steelworkers, through plant closings and technological change.

Who is benefiting from the precariousness of the situation? I think in the short term, as you say, the employer is benefiting. They have a new market; they can compete with us. They can put competitors over the table, they can threaten workers to close plants, they can threaten us with being temporary workers. People who have no status are also working in our field. In the short term, it's quite clear that the employer is benefiting.

Now, the concern is, as you say, the long term, and the one that won't benefit in the long term is Canada. When you have 59% of working people making less than \$30,000, that implies that their spending potential and the country's possibility of growing economically is very limited.

The Chair: Thank you. Just finish your thought there, and we'll move on.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: Okay.

Of the 59% of people who make less than \$30,000, 99% of them do not pay taxes because of their amount of money, and that is also affecting Canada and the ability of the Government of Canada to use government money properly in infrastructure, education, health care, and all the needs for a better society.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garcia-Orgales.

We're going to now move to Madame Savoie for five minutes.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

When I hear over and over again the amount of money that's going into the child care allowance under the pretext of giving parents choice, I have to wonder if the Conservatives have met the sorcerer's apprentice. Anyone who would say that \$100 child allowance would allow a parent to make a choice, the choice between staying at home and going to work, in Victoria, my riding, the most expensive city in

Canada...I don't know. I'd like to find out what kind of medication they're taking, because I wouldn't mind some of it.

Just to put it on the record, an analysis of the Quebec child care system indicates that 40¢ out of every dollar invested in its child care services is returned to the provincial economy the following year, primarily in increased taxes arising from the high labour force participation. So the linkage between employability and early learning in child care opportunities is so clear.

I would like to speak to a few of the other guests we have today. From the perspective of your association, you expressed the need for workers and you indicated that there had been some serious losses because of the lack of workers. I believe Mr. Garcia-Orgales mentioned that if there is a continual need, why not go through the regular process, so that the immigrants who do come will have some rights as Canadians and will have some protection under the law, which doesn't seem to be the case with foreign workers at the moment?

• (1705)

Mr. Gregg Badger: Actually, the workers who come here under these programs do join a union and they do have the same rights and receive the same pay as Canadians do. This low-skilled...it is still a pilot project. It's hopefully going to become a permanent program. But this is different from the skilled worker program, which is available to bring in skilled workers on a permanent basis.

Low-skilled can come here. They can become, in some provinces, provincial nominees, so they can become permanent residents. But they are low-skilled workers at the outset. This is a relatively new program to help fill that need.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So they work with other regular employees in the same working conditions and with the same pay scale?

Mr. Gregg Badger: The same pay, the same working conditions.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Gregg Badger: Ten per cent of a workforce in a meat plant would be a lot, when it's foreign workers.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Okay. They're at exactly the same pay scale. That's useful.

Mr. James Laws: The employers need to demonstrate that they have exhausted looking for workers in Canada. If you visit the meat packers, they have fairly large human resources departments that are constantly looking for workers.

Ms. Denise Savoie: I appreciate that in some industries, in some sectors, it may be the case. I think we occasionally hear of misuse where there are Canadian workers, but it's more convenient to hire workers in that way because there are fewer responsibilities in some sectors. It doesn't appear to be the case here.

Mr. Gregg Badger: No. In fact, as I mentioned, it costs the employer a lot more to hire these foreign workers. If he could find Canadians, he would do so, because this costs more.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Jorge Garcia-Orgales: I want to clarify my position. I never mentioned that these workers are not unionized or are treated differently. They are sometimes treated differently when there is no union in the workplace, but our main concern is not particularly the unionization or the wages. It's the threat that you have a contract that will expire, and it could be or could not be extended. Depending on what happens, you could or could not become Canadian through the new regulations. It gives complete insecurity to the workers. If there is a situation in the workplace, will they align with their co-workers or will they feel pressure to be closer to their employers? That's number one.

Number two is the issue of the rights of people. As the meat sector council mentioned, this has been the situation for years and years, it's becoming worse, and it's costing employers a bunch of money. Why don't they bring them through the Canadian system and keep them there forever? They then wouldn't have to spend money in another 24 months to bring in another bunch or to reapply. Bring them in, use the application system, get them in, and they'd have the rights of any other Canadian worker. If you don't find workers here, let's find them some place else, bring them in, and let them stay.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to move to Mr. Chong for five minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you all for your presentations. I would like to put a few questions to Mrs. Lysack.

[English]

I want to thank you, Madam Lysack, for your presentation.

I don't doubt your sincerity or your belief in your proposed system of child care for the country. I don't doubt that you truly believe it is the right way to go. But with the greatest of respect, I disagree with you on two major points.

The first is that it is not the responsibility of the Government of Canada, the federal government, to run a day care system.

[Translation]

It is a provincial responsibility in Canada. Similarly, education is also a provincial responsibility.

[English]

We have provincial jurisdictions in this country that are primarily responsible for things like education—primary school education and secondary school education. In many respects early childhood learning and childcare are really extensions of that system. Much in the same way as we would never dare to tell a province how they should run their public education system in terms of the number of students in a classroom and the standards they should apply, our view is the same with respect to child care—it is a provincial area of jurisdiction.

We as government believe there are certain areas of provincial jurisdiction where we should use federal spending power to effect

national priorities. Those include health care through the Canada Health Act, infrastructure through national infrastructure programs, and research and development through various funding mechanisms like the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the like. But when it comes to education—public school education, primary school education, and child care—this is really best delivered by provincial and local governments, through a mix of for-profit or not-for-profit providers. That's our view.

Cross-jurisdictional programs, like the national child care system you're advocating, are fraught with cross-jurisdictional difficulties. The case in point is that when we took government, the secondary agreements for this national child care program had not yet been signed with all the provinces. For example, New Brunswick had refused to sign the agreement because they didn't agree with the standards and the view of the Government of Canada on this so-called national system.

Even when we took government, the agreements with all the provinces hadn't been finalized, precisely because it's an area of provincial jurisdiction, and some provinces didn't want us intruding into their jurisdiction. The country is broad and big enough that what works in the megalopolis of the greater Toronto area may not work in rural Saskatchewan. We believe it's best delivered by provincial and local governments.

There's another thing I disagree with you on. We have put a lot of money into support for families, and specifically support for child care. The old proposal was \$1.2 billion a year for a national system. We have put \$2.4 billion into the universal child care benefit that people ridicule as being only \$100 a month, but that's double the money per child in this country compared to the old \$1.2 billion system.

In addition to that, we're providing \$250 million a year in capital incentives for provinces to build new spaces. We are also—and this is the big one—enhancing the transfers to the provinces, as announced in Monday's budget, by \$16 billion in new money over the next seven years. That averages \$2.3 billion a year in enhancements to the Canada social transfer, which is used by provinces to deliver social services, social programs, and education. The full picture here is that we have poured significant new money into the budget to enhance that transfer, which is one of the reasons provinces like Quebec are very supportive of it, and one of the reasons we have moved on this issue.

Do we believe in a nationally run, centrally run, national child care system? No. Do we see the need for child care for Canadian families? Yes, but we believe that's best delivered through provincial governments, local governments, and enhancements to the social transfer, which we've delivered on.

I just put those two points on the table, with the greatest respect. I don't doubt your sincerity and your belief in what you are doing, but I strongly disagree with it.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong. That's all the time we have.

Ms. Monica Lysack: I don't have an opportunity to respond, even briefly, to the comment?

The Chair: You may respond very quickly.

Ms. Monica Lysack: First, I want to say that I actually agree with much of what you have said. Your approach in welcoming healthy debate about public policy is what makes the democracy of Canada so great. Organizations like ours need to continue to have a voice to raise those issues. The fact that we differ in some areas is a healthy thing, because that's how we get to better solutions. We disagreed vehemently with some of the things the previous government was doing as well.

There is a large misunderstanding about nationally run day care. I don't think anyone has promoted the idea of nationally run day care. I'm a former member of the Government of Saskatchewan and negotiated agreements like the ECD agreement and the multilateral framework agreement. It's absolutely an issue of provincial jurisdiction and needs to be recognized that way. That approach supported a transfer but, within this great federation, some equality of service across the country despite those regional differences.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're almost out of time. I know that Mr. Merasty had a couple of quick questions, and then we would have Mr. Lake. Then we're going to wrap up, because we need to deal with the motion before us.

Mr. Merasty.

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Very quickly, yesterday I talked about employability and the aboriginal population being mobilized to meet some of the needs that are out there. We won't, unfortunately, have time to get into that, but not enough is being done in that area for this emerging population, which for many provinces presents a competitive advantage.

The second thing is that a big factor in employability is access to child care. I direct this to Ms. Lysack. I've asked the government about child care on-reserve. You look at these policies, and there is federal jurisdiction on-reserve. I can't see any of these policies creating one single space on-reserve. We have 50% of the population under the age of 18, and 50% of that population probably under the age of 10 or 11. The need for child care in economically marginalized areas and on-reserve is probably at its greatest in those areas, and yet not one of these policies actually addresses that.

I haven't any answers from that perspective. I don't know if your organization has looked at that at all.

Ms. Monica Lysack: In my own personal experience, having worked with reserves in Saskatchewan on developing child care services, you are right, it is absolutely the most critical need in the country. Clearly that is an area of federal jurisdiction, and yet when this government a year ago terminated the agreements with the provinces and territories, they gave a one-year notice, or transferred the funds for that one year. However, the funds that were allocated for on-reserve aboriginal child care were cut immediately, so they didn't even have the benefit of that.

That, to me, is ludicrous and quite mean-spirited. We all know the poverty and marginalization issues that our aboriginal people are facing on reserves, and we're in the position of having international aid organizations come to sponsor our aboriginal children on-reserve, yet this government is immediately cutting. They didn't even give them the grace period of one year that they gave to the

provinces and territories. To immediately cut that funding to on-reserve child care is just shameful.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Merasty.

You have time for just a couple of quick questions, Mr. Lake.

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

I would like to go back to child care, if I could.

Ms. Lysack made a couple of the comments during her speech, and at other times. She talked about the universal child care benefit being "punitive to working mothers", which implies that it actually punishes them compared to what the situation would be if they didn't have it at all. That is an unbelievable comment.

Second, she made a comment that eight out of ten children do not have access to the child care their parents want for them. The flip side of that would be that only two of ten children actually have access to the child care their parents want for them. Anybody who actually considers that statement in light of much research, the *Today's Parent* poll, the Vanier Institute poll, and just common sense.... Just through talking to parents—for any of us in the room who have door-knocked—even if you are on the other side of the issue, you would realize that the idea that eight out of ten children do not have access to the child care their parents want for them is absolutely ridiculous. I find it odd that they, coming from a research-based, federal government-funded organization, could even throw a number like that out there.

She used the phrase "early years form the foundation for the child". Finally we have something we agree on. I do believe that early years form the foundation for the child, and I guess I would ask who should decide what the foundation should be. Should it be the government that decides what the foundation should be, or should it be the parents?

I would argue that your organization is simply driven by an ideology that children are best served by a government-run day care system. She uses the word "universal". Universal means everyone, so in other words, everyone would send their kids to a government-run day care institution. But not everyone wants to do that.

The Liberal plan simply funded parents who were wanting to send their kids to day care. There was no other option. The Conservative plan gives the same amount of money to everyone. It gives the same amount of money per child to every parent across the country. Whether it be the universal child care benefit or whether it be the child tax credit that we're talking about, it treats every parent the same, and those parents can make the best decision for their family. No one has ever suggested that the universal child care benefit is supposed to pay all of the costs of a child care program for a child. It is supposed to enable parents to make the best decision that they can make for their family.

● (1720)

The Chair: Mr. Lake, I've just been informed that this indeed is the 15-minute bell, because we have so many votes tonight.

Mr. Lessard, I apologize for that. We have fewer witnesses tomorrow and we will get to your motion. We'll make it a priority tomorrow.

I did not realize the bells would be starting early. We are about four minutes into a 15-minute bell, so my suggestion is that we're going to adjourn.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here and for taking the time.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.