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Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1535)

[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 want to thank our witnesses for being here today. We appreciate your flexibility in being able to reschedule. We had hoped to see you some time ago, but that didn't work out, so thank you for once again making the time to be here today.

Each organization will get seven minutes to present their case. Then we'll have five-minute rounds of questions because we have a tight schedule.

Today we have Ms. Lumsden, Mr. Kozij, and Mr. Gosselin from the Department of Human Resources and Social Development. Who's going to be speaking today?

Mr. Kozij, thank you, and welcome.

Mr. John Kozij (Director, Aboriginal Strategic Policy, Aboriginal Affairs, Employment Programs Policy and Design, Department of Human Resources and Social Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members of this committee. My name is John Kozij, and I am representing the Department of Human Resources and Social Development.

With me are Gerald Gosselin, a colleague from the aboriginal peoples directorate of Service Canada, and Marilyn Lumsden, who, like me, works for the aboriginal affairs directorate of HRSDC.

It's a pleasure to be here today to speak with you about aboriginal people and employability issues in Canada and to be part of this panel. I believe background information in the form of a deck has already been distributed to you, specifically a deck entitled "Aboriginal Labour Market Development: Demographic Overview, and HRSDC Aboriginal Labour Market Programs". I'd not planned to walk through all the details of the deck, but rather to highlight some salient points to the discussion today.

Specifically, I want to paint a portrait for you of current issues and challenges with respect to greater aboriginal labour market participation, and secondly, the role of HRSDC, our aboriginal partners, in aboriginal labour market development.

To start, with the 2001 census as a guide, there are almost one million aboriginal people in Canada. This is a young population, and growing fast. This population experienced a growth rate of 22%

between 1996 and 2001. If you compare that to the non-aboriginal population, it's quite dramatic, because that growth rate was only 4%. It is a young population with an average age of about 25 years old, compared to the Canadian average, which is about 37.

In labour market terms, in light of the young age of this population, the growth is most rapid for those of an age group who would be seeking their first jobs, their first skills training, and who also would be starting post-secondary education. Although Ontario has the largest aboriginal population for a province in Canada, over 60% of the aboriginal population is in the west, and that higher concentration of the aboriginal population in the west means that the aboriginal workforce will be a larger part of new entrants in the future, and increasingly important to the western labour force as a whole.

While the aboriginal labour force represents an untapped labour resource to help alleviate skills shortages, in some sectors and some regions there are also problems for this being realized. Aboriginal unemployment is almost three times higher than the national average, four times higher on-reserve and over two times higher off-reserve. The most important reason for higher levels of unemployment is education. Almost half the aboriginal population has less than high school education, compared to about 30% of the population as a whole in Canada. There is also a corresponding gap in literacy levels.

With every picture there are also the positives, though. Aboriginal participation rates—that is, the percentage of aboriginal people either working or actively looking for work—are not that much different from the Canadian average, about 61% to 64%. In addition, as a percentage, 16% of aboriginal people compared to 13% of non-aboriginal people are graduates of trade certificate programs. We can see, too, that the tightening of the labour market in the west has had a positive effect on off-reserve aboriginal labour market outcomes.

At the request of the Alberta government, Statistics Canada added questions to the monthly labour force survey that allowed aboriginal people off-reserve to be identified. While gaps do remain between the aboriginal and the non-aboriginal population, there were a number of positive findings. First, a robust Alberta economy produced strong labour market outcomes for aboriginal people. Second, the Métis had relative success in the labour market, with an unemployment rate of about 8%. Last, completion of post-secondary education was particularly important for aboriginal people since it dramatically increased their chances of obtaining employment.

While there have been some sharp improvements over the years, the evidence from Alberta indicates no sharp improvements. In the off-reserve aboriginal labour market, there are enduring problems. It is those enduring problems and a recognition by the federal government that extra effort was required to improve the situation that led successive governments, starting in 1991, to support national-level efforts to improve labour market outcomes of aboriginal people.

● (1540)

Currently this support is manifested in three ways from our department.

First, the government supports the aboriginal human resources development strategy, or the AHRDS, as we like to call it. We're working with aboriginal organizations, 80 across the country. HRSDC helps to support aboriginal-run employment and training service platforms that assist aboriginal people to prepare for, find, get, and keep jobs.

Second, and complementary to the AHRDS, we support an aboriginal sector council that works with private sector organizations and other sector councils to promote aboriginal employment.

Last, we support the aboriginal skills and employment partnership initiative, or ASEP, as we call it, which seeks to maximize aboriginal employment in major economic development projects, with partnered support from the private sector and others.

These projects offer employment opportunities to aboriginal people in areas where they live and where a clear and present large economic opportunity is evident. With our aboriginal partners, the AHRDS helps more than 16,000 aboriginal people return to employment every year.

In Leo Tolstoy's book, *Anna Karenina*, he started famously by saying, "All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." I think this is also true for aboriginal people who succeed and fail in the labour market. The reason that someone succeeds can largely be attributed to their education level and the state of the economy. The reasons for failure are as individual as the person who walks through our doors for assistance and needs special attention.

The AHRDS was created because we recognize that special attention is fundamental to success, and that programs of general application for all Canadians are not suitably flexible and sensitive enough to meet the needs of the aboriginal community. People such as Mr. Dinsdale of the National Association of Friendship Centres and Sherry Lewis of the Native Women's Association of Canada are counted among the AHRDS partners who we value to deliver results

for aboriginal people by tailoring labour market programming to their needs.

As a concluding note of pertinence to this committee, in the budget this week additional support to ASEP was announced of \$105 million over five years. This additional investment will more than double the size of the current program, and we anticipate this increase to ASEP will lead to 9,000 aboriginal people receiving skills training and 6,000 careers in major economic development projects.

Those are my opening remarks. I'd be happy to respond to any questions or comments from the honourable members.

Thank you.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kozij.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Peter Dinsdale, from the National Association of Friendship Centres.

Mr. Dinsdale, you have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Peter Dinsdale (Executive Director, National Association of Friendship Centres): Thank you very much.

Thank you to this committee for the opportunity to appear before you.

I've taken a brief look at your employability study so far. You've been going to a lot of places and hearing from a lot of people, so I hope you have something to add in the dialogue.

I'm here from the National Association of Friendship Centres. We are the national body for local friendship centres across Canada. There are currently 116 friendship centres, which are community agencies from coast to coast to coast all across this country. It's important to say at the outset that we are not a representative body. I don't claim to represent anyone other than the friendship centres that are members of ours. We serve all aboriginal people: first nations, both status and non-status; Métis people from all regions of Canada; and Inuit peoples, in large, medium, and small communities.

Friendship centres are gathering places of hope and refuge, places for aboriginal women to take their rightful place in leadership and governance in our agencies and our communities. They are places for our young people to access programming and to become engaged and empowered. They are places to celebrate our culture and places to heal. Often, in communities, friendship centres are where urban aboriginal people come when they're hungry, to access training when they need it, to start on a path towards a better life for themselves and their nation.

Last year in these friendship centres across Canada we provided over 1.1 million client services. Now, if someone came 10 times it would be counted as 10, I want to be clear on that, but we provide 1.1 million client services through those agencies. Collectively they are an impressive capacity to provide services to the often-forgotten population of urban aboriginal peoples. Many friendship centres are involved in employment and training programs. Across the country there are 119 employment and training programs found in friendship centres. They include things like the O-G initiative, the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, and Grand River employment and training initiative, or O-GI for short, which is a part of the AHRDS process that was just described.

We hire summer students. We're involved in that process. Many centres are involved with provincial and municipal partnerships to waive subsidies to hire people with disabilities; to do employment and training programs, job creation programs, first nation AHRDS partnerships, life skills programs, etc. We're involved in a variety of different ways.

Through those programs we provide around 87,000 client services across the country. They have done this, for the most part, through piecing together local and regional relationships.

We aren't really a part of the formal national process for employment training or through AHRDS. When people come to our friendship centres from employment training services, we hope we provide something we've been calling the friendship centre advantage. Clients are able to access cultural programming, economic development programming, education, employment, families, food bank, health, housing, justice, language, culture, sports and recreation, and youth programming. It's through all these various programs that people in communities have better labour market outcomes. People don't come in just without a job; they come in needing training, food, healing, addictions counselling, and all kinds of things. Friendship centres are the types of agencies that can do that.

Clearly there's an advantage to working with people like us. I said at the outset that we're not involved in the AHRDS framework formally. Friendship centres have been involved previously, and some have been able to have relationships regionally or locally. I'm not really here today to talk about that—the exclusion, things we could do—I'm just here to talk about employability and our observations based on how we are involved.

We do have some thoughts about the existing framework. We don't think there's enough access for urban aboriginal people to programming. We believe there are some very specific urban access issues—that clients in the urban areas are directed to other agreement holders. If a first nation person comes here to Ottawa for a job, they are directed to another agency in order to get access to those benefits. This kind of integration is counter to what the Supreme Court found was a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and there have been other court decisions that reinforce this. The current delivery structure supports separate and non-integrated systems, and we need to get around that.

I think we need to think bigger. I think we know about the worker shortage that exists in this country, in the oil sands and elsewhere. We know these companies are flying workers from Mexico and from

Newfoundland into Alberta to do jobs, literally flying over our communities. Both literally and figuratively, they're flying over first nations people to get to these jobs, and there's something fundamentally wrong about that.

The same is true in many industries across the country. If we can't get to the issues of grinding poverty, we aren't going to get to the issues through employment and training. We have to make sure there are ways of doing that.

We're advocating that we have partnerships with the Conference Board of Canada, with the sector councils, to identify employment training fields and priorities that are ready. In fact, we train directly for those areas. We know that in B.C. the manufacturing sector is booming, and partly because of the Olympics. In Alberta it's the resource industry, and in Ontario it's manufacturing; in the east it's natural gas, and in Quebec it's forestry. We should be employing and training people directly for these industries as opposed to having non-targeted strategies. All these industries require employees, and all these employees require supports. So we need to partner with the private sector and the trade unions to train aboriginal people. And friendship centres are excellent ways of doing that because of the friendship centre advantage.

• (1550)

We need to make sure that our social and human services are providing a blanket of services around those clients who come into our centres, for all the reasons I'm sure you're only too aware of. We need to make sure we're helping aboriginal people to fully participate in the opportunities this country affords and to be part of the solution.

Friendship centres are ready to be engaged, and we're looking forward to sharing this vision with this committee and with the department, when they're ready.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dinsdale.

We're now going to move to Ms. Lewis, who's from the Native Women's Association of Canada.

Thank you for being here. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Sherry Lewis (Executive Director, Native Women's Association of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me extend my thanks to all the members of this committee for the invitation to appear as a witness today to speak about employability issues in Canada, specifically concerning aboriginal women.

These issues are of great importance to me and the Native Women's Association of Canada. We are an AHRDA holder, but at this time, we are in a pot of money in which we enhance the AHRDA program. We don't access our fair share of that funding. With the enhancements we do put forward to address employability issues for women, we take a holistic approach and address the broader determinants of employment success.

Aboriginal women still experience the highest rates of violence in this country, have the lowest education levels and the largest number of children, and live in poverty. These broad determinants of employability success can be framed under three topics.

The first topic is the minimum education requirement. In order for there to be a systemic approach, the jurisdiction and control of lifelong learning must have a collaborative and strategic objective that includes all stakeholders. Aboriginal women must be assured that protections will be established that will respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of all aboriginal peoples in lifelong learning goals. Specifically, education at all levels must be culturally appropriate and controlled by aboriginal peoples, respecting gender, race, language, disability, and sexual orientation. To accomplish this, federal and provincial territorial governments need reform and activity transfers regarding jurisdictional control or the inclusion of aboriginal communities in educational institutions, including in child development programming.

Jurisdictions should evolve to include value learning, recognizing that learning happens via many non-traditional methods. This would clearly recognize culturally appropriate learning centres, teachings, and traditions. Currently, nearly half the aboriginal population has not obtained a high school certificate. This, in turn, leads to low-paying jobs, low possibilities for advancement and promotion, or dependency on government benefit programs. And the cycle of poverty is hard to break.

Therefore, we recommend the following: that national standards be developed for curriculum content on all on-reserve aboriginal school curricula; that government develop and encourage initiatives to implement an aboriginal studies curriculum, and that this curriculum be done by aboriginal peoples; articulated, accredited programs that integrate workplace and work practicums for advancement opportunities for women; that government support home work and nurture partnerships with college and university preparation courses for post-secondary studies; and that government increase financial support to continue and improve training initiatives, such as the aboriginal human resource development agreements, to upgrade skills.

The second topic is skilled worker shortages. Canada will face a skilled labour shortage as many Canadian baby boomers start retiring and the economy remains strong. At the same time, aboriginal people in Canada are the nation's youngest and fastest growing segment of the population. We must find a way to change the high percentage of unemployment for aboriginal people, utilizing both on- and non-reserve approaches. The aboriginal population is the largest untapped human resource in Canada, and we believe we can solve Canada's labour shortage.

Therefore, we recommend that opportunities and partnerships with corporations and industry leaders be developed and brought to

the attention of aboriginal people through financial assistance for continuing education; that they are provided employment upon completion of their training or studies; and that government develops and markets to industry leaders a policy of inclusion of aboriginal people as a solution for skilled worker shortages.

Finally, our third topic is training and day care issues. Upon dissolution of marriage, women often have to upgrade their skills and education to re-enter the workforce and support their children. They usually have to travel to urban centres, where they lose their support network of extended family.

Aboriginal women lead the way in graduates when barriers are removed from education, training, and skills development opportunities. Aboriginal women also lead the way in terms of small business development when barriers are removed.

Our studies have found that child care and the costs of child care are difficult to access, and they are insufficient. This leads to single mothers having to carry the burden of child care on their own or having to receive government benefits and pass up the opportunities to train to re-enter the job market. Current initiatives do not have set-aside budgets for child care and limit the ability of aboriginal women to receive training by having such restrictive criteria.

• (1555)

Therefore, we recommend that all government initiatives regarding training, education, and/or skill upgrading include a budget allocation for child or dependant care; that all government initiatives remove restrictive criteria for aboriginal mothers who seek training or education to re-enter the job market; that government develops, in conjunction with aboriginal people, a national aboriginal child care program that would respond to the needs of aboriginal families, day care facilities, and child care policies that allow for at-home care, extended family support, and remuneration of child care.

It is clear that good programming for aboriginal women and their children has to vary according to their needs and needs their involvement in creating these programs. However, statistics send a clear message: with the high level of unemployment and poverty, combined with a very young population that has a high unemployment rate, aboriginals must become involved in the workforce to share in this economic prosperity.

I thank you, Mr. Chair, for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lewis, for your presentation.

We're now going to move to our last presenter today. We have Mr. Brown, from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

Mr. Brown, you have seven minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gerald Brown (President, Association of Canadian Community Colleges): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to be with you this afternoon to discuss a very important subject.

[*English*]

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges wishes to congratulate the standing committee on undertaking a study on employability issues in Canada and providing the association with an opportunity to highlight several areas that we believe the committee should be addressing in its study.

As the national and international voice of Canada's 150 publicly funded colleges, institutes of technology, CEGEPs, and university colleges across Canada, a primary role of our institutions is to engage proactively as a first-line responder in response to their mandate to contribute to the economic and social development of the communities they serve. With campuses in well over 1,000 communities across Canada, 1.5 million full-time and part-time learners, and close to 60,000 professionals, our institutions play a pivotal role in the employer-, individual-, and government-funded skills training, and have traditionally been the implementers of federal training programs for the unemployed and aboriginal communities.

Specifically, the association and its member institutions recommend to the standing committee the following four recommendations.

First, the federal government must take the lead and move forward with governments, business, labour, educational institutions, and other community groups to develop and implement a comprehensive pan-Canadian workforce development strategy that will address the pressing skills gaps facing our nation and be inclusive of all Canadians. The time has come for all stakeholders to work together to develop a strategy that will encompass the needs of both the employed and the unemployed and recognize the diversity of individuals who need the opportunities for learning and training.

Increased skills requirements, rapid technology change, the demographics of an aging population, a smaller workforce, and a rapid decline in skilled workers throughout almost every industry result in skilled workers becoming an increasingly scarce commodity across our country. We cannot as a nation continue to ignore the realities of our current and future workforce and not seize this as an opportunity to assist the unemployed and disadvantaged segments of our populations. In particular, with our first nations—the only segment that is in a positive growth pattern and one of Canada's youngest segments—linking these communities with their local community colleges is a critical first step.

As for our second recommendation, the federal government must act now to reinvest in essential components of prosperity: the quality, capacity, and access to Canada's publicly funded post-secondary and skills systems. Canadian colleges and institutes represent a master

key able to open the door to skills development for a diverse range of learners in all regions of our country.

In this context, however, we wish to acknowledge the federal government's announcements in the last budget. The transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education, as well as the \$500 million per year over the next six years to address gaps in labour market programming support, are important steps that are certainly in the right direction. Colleges and institutes now urge the federal and provincial governments to collaborate in order to ensure that these transfer funds do indeed reach their intended targets.

Third, the association recommends the creation of a college institute access fund that would provide multifaceted learner support services and tools within the community, particularly in rural and remote communities, in disadvantaged groups that are in urban settings, and in aboriginal communities where the demand for skills and literacy development is of particular significance.

Creative and flexible training initiatives and support services will be required to meet the training needs of a diverse population. As Canada's largest skills trainer—there are 1.5 million learners in our institutions—we're well placed to address the skills gaps across the nation. Clearly, colleges and institutes must be at the forefront, working closely with the federal and provincial governments in developing future training strategies that will address skills shortages, meet the learning needs of a diverse student population, and contribute to the overall economic growth of our nation.

Finally, the association recommends the creation of a new learner support system that will reduce the complexities of existing systems; increase the access to post-secondary education and skills; address the concerns of aboriginal communities, immigrants, and other disadvantaged groups; and include grants for the first two years of post-secondary education.

In closing, I draw the attention of the standing committee to the documents we've submitted to you. In there you will see a report that addresses the way in which our institutions respond to the needs of our aboriginal learners and our immigrant learners. But in that document particularly, there's a graphic that really outlines how our institutions play a key role.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for this opportunity to be with you this afternoon. I await your questions with considerable interest.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown, for being here.

We're now going to start our first round.

Mr. Savage is next for five minutes, please.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming today. They were good presentations, and helpful in our study.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Brown. It's good to see you again, and I thank you for coming out.

The community college network in Canada is going to be even more important going forward than it has been so far, as we try to meet the skills needs of Canadians and of the workplace. In my own province of Nova Scotia, the community college network has really improved in the last decade, largely under the leadership of Ray Ivany, whom I'm sure you know, and now Joan McArthur-Blair. In fact, tomorrow afternoon I'm going to have a tour of the as yet unopened new community college home-based campus in my riding of Dartmouth. It's going to be one of the most impressive post-secondary institutions in the country, community college, university, or otherwise, and I'm very excited about that.

Community colleges have had a beef, and it's a fair beef, I think. I'm not sure if you're prepared to say this, but I think they've been underfunded compared to universities, and in a lot of ways, such as in percentage of operating funds and certainly in terms of research. Community colleges are doing a great deal of applied research, and they can do more.

With this \$800 million that has been proposed to go for post-secondary education, I wonder if you're prepared to give me a sense of how much of that should go to the community colleges?

• (1605)

Mr. Gerald Brown: All of it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Savage: All right, then here's my next question. How much would you expect?

Mr. Gerald Brown: First of all, thank you very much for those comments. In fact, by those comments, you've certainly convinced me that you have a good sense of what our institutions are all about. In fact, I would say that your colleges and your institutes and your CEGEPs are probably Canada's best-kept secret. And you're right, we haven't necessarily taxed them to the best ability that we have.

Traditionally, funding at the post-secondary level has always leaned quite significantly toward the universities, as you said, both in the applied research fund and just in the very role that we have, which is preparing skills training.

We're optimistic now that more and more people like you are increasingly aware of the role that we play in our institutions. People are familiar with our institutions and are working closely with our institutions. As we mentioned a few moments ago, we hope that as the money does in fact travel in all these Brinks trucks across the 13 jurisdictions in Canada, and as it begins to be distributed in the provinces, our institutions will, at that very least, get their fair share.

Mr. Michael Savage: A lot of people have called for a dedicated transfer for post-secondary education, as we did with health care, a carving out of the percentage of money that should go for post-secondary education. A lot of people think there need to be stipulations on that money. In other words, before the money flows, there needs to be a pan-Canadian discussion that comes to some

priority areas, whether we're talking about student access, infrastructure, or operating funds.

Is that the view of the community colleges as well?

Mr. Gerald Brown: Absolutely. We've been on record for the last six years, before the finance parliamentary committee, about the importance of, one, increasing the funding; and two, targeting it. It's very important to target it, because that way we have the greatest sense of how it can move forward.

There are probably some lessons to be learned from the health accord. We could draw upon those lessons, but for us, from the point of view of the community colleges, our position has always been strong and very clear on that. In fact, we would welcome the opportunity to have priorities established, and accountability measures to go with them.

Mr. Michael Savage: One of the issues that I think are most important is the issue of accessibility. We talk a bit about this when we talk about aboriginal Canadians. We could also talk about persons with disabilities, as well as low-income families. Those are areas where we haven't closed the gap in terms of participation and enrolment, in community college to a lesser extent, but in university in particular.

I'm probably running out of time, but let me ask you a reasonably specific question on the accessibility front. The Millennium Scholarship Foundation is open to community colleges as well as to universities. I wonder if you'd give us an opinion on the millennium scholarship. I think 2008-09 is when it will need to be replenished, and I wonder what your view is on the millennium scholarship.

Mr. Gerald Brown: Actually, we're quite concerned about what the future of that is going to be. As you know, close to \$350 million is invested in learner assistance and is targeted very much to the neediest, so it is more than likely touching upon many of the areas this committee would be concerned about, like aboriginal communities, immigrants, and the disadvantaged. As we move forward in the next 12 to 18 months, we certainly hope we do in fact ensure that the funds that have been available through the millennium fund continue to be available.

Whether it's with the millennium fund or not, I think that's a legitimate debate that everybody needs to have. I will say that over the years, at the beginning of all of this, the millennium foundation was probably one of the foundations most hated by the provinces. It is now most loved by the provinces, probably for obvious reasons. So we may not have to reinvent the wheel here, but simply refine it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

[*Translation*]

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

I want to thank our guests for their contribution to our proceedings.

Ms. Lewis, if I understand correctly, your organization represents non-status Métis women across Canada. Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: That's correct: first nations, Métis, non-status women, and we partner with Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada to address Inuit women's needs.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: This particularly concerns women from urban areas, if I understand correctly.

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: Yes, our primary focus is in urban centres.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: The department's statistics show a higher unemployment rate among Aboriginal people. It's very perceptible. I believe that the rate is 28% on the reserves and 14% off reserves. Those rates are higher than those of other citizens; that's obvious.

Do you, or someone from the department, know the unemployment rate among Aboriginal women who would like to work?

[English]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: We have requested many times disaggregated data that show the rates specifically for aboriginal women, and we have not been successful in gaining that information.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: So you don't have those figures.

Based on your remarks—and we find this entirely logical, since a number of people have testified to that effect—access to employment should be supported by a set of measures. Earlier you raised the question of child care centres. In my opinion, there is also the issue of housing quality and quality of life as such. On 287 of 780 reserves, I believe, water quality is not good.

I come from northern Quebec, and I am quite familiar with the Aboriginal reserves, more particularly those of La Vérendrye and Baie-Carrière. I am a sponsor of eight Algonquins. Over the years, particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I became aware of the situation of Aboriginal people. When I return to those reserves, I see that the conditions in which those people live have not improved much. Here I'm talking about the reserves. I'm also going to talk to you about the situation off the reserves.

It's the same thing in Malartic, but especially in Val d'Or and Sullivan. If the Cree corporation wasn't there to employ these people, the situation would be virtually disastrous. Fortunately, the Cree corporation gives them work. To what do you attribute this state of affairs? Even if we work hard to try to find solutions and make the best possible recommendations, I get the impression that we aren't any smarter than our predecessors. They also found solutions, but why weren't they implemented?

Here I'm also talking to my Conservative friends, since they cut the support to the organizations assisting the least well-off in our

society, and this problem concerns you as well. How can we explain why matters are not progressing?

I'm pleased to hear you remind us of these things today, but these are problems that I've previously become aware of. The conditions concerned are essential to integrating Aboriginal people in the labour market. I'd like to hear your comments on that point, particularly those of Ms. Lewis and Mr. Dinsdale. Of course, I'd also like to hear those of the departmental people, if they have a response on the subject.

[English]

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds left, so it will have to be a quick response from each one.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: It's true that I only had seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: Certainly one of the difficulties is not having the information to be able to target appropriate resources. We've asked for gender-based analysis on the aboriginal human resources development agreements and have yet to receive that. They explain that there are a number of barriers, why that can occur, so we go by the numbers of women who are waiting for employment and training funds to come down. That's what we have to gauge, although we know that numbers of aboriginal women are having to leave reserves as a result of losing everything because of a lack of matrimonial property protection on reserve.

Aboriginal women are frequently starting at a lower level than most Canadian women would have to if they were starting their lives over again. They have to leave everything on-reserve, for those who live on-reserve, and go to urban centres where there is little or no support. Friendship centres are certainly there, but not to the extent of resources that are needed in the community. So they frequently are at the bottom of the list for every opportunity that's there, and not knowing the community because they've just left their home communities and all their safety networks. So there are all the other issues, as well as being targets in the community for violence.

There are lots of issues that impact why, if she does have an opportunity to get a job, she can't stay there, because she's going to work with a black eye, or her child care that she has kind of put together has fallen apart, or she or her children are now experiencing health issues. This all begins to affect, then, this lightly put-together job that she's trying for the first time in her life, without any real supports and without any information that helps us target, and change, and evolve these programs in the way that they need to evolve.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

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

Thank you all for your presentations. There is so little time to deal with hugely complex issues.

I'll start with Mr. Brown. I'm very impressed with the way our college systems—I'm most familiar with the one we have in British Columbia—seem to allow seamless transition to university and, where required, strong apprenticeship programs, and so on, but I've also been concerned about the underinvestment by the last Liberal government. There is certainly an indication in this budget of some investment, a transfer to provinces, which is welcome, still below the level that we had even in the early 1990s, but nonetheless a welcome addition.

I've argued for a long time for strong legislation to ensure stable long-term funding for accessible post-secondary education, quality post-secondary education, to publicly administered colleges and universities.

You raised the issue of the need to establish pan-Canadian targets. We don't seem to have the tools to do that at the moment. It seems we spend most of our time squabbling between jurisdictions. What tools are missing to make that happen? That's the first question.

The other one is that this budget has been virtually silent on literacy, and from everything we've heard at this committee, we know about the importance of it and the need for federal leadership in this area because of the implications for the labour market.

I wonder if you'd comment on those two.

Mr. Gerald Brown: Thank you very much. There were a lot of questions there.

First, you were talking about the tools. The association and its 150 institutions are operative right now in probably 75 countries around the world, because the rest of the world has really realized what Canada probably is just now starting to realize, that its college system is very crucial to developing that skilled workforce that's not just the elite but addressing all the rest of Canada.

One of the hardest to explain things when you're in other countries is that there is no national ministry of education. I'm not standing here in front of a federal parliamentary committee to suggest that we have a national ministry of education, but that's part of the difficulty we have, because as a result of that we have 13 jurisdictions all trying to work in some sort of common denominator. When you have 13 jurisdictions working in common denominators, you sometimes tend to lead towards the lowest common denominator.

So what I think we really have to look at is ways in which both the federal government and the provincial governments can put aside some of these jurisdictional debates. That's why we think one of the vehicles is pan-Canadian workforce development, if we can start to look at ways in which we can set down some shared common goals that we'd like to try to achieve.

Some of the agreements that exist between the provinces and the federal government around the labour agreements have started to set some of those down, and that's encouraging to see. Some of those started with the Liberals and are being continued by the Conservative Party. So we're encouraged by seeing some of those events.

Literacy is an integral part of that pan-Canadian workforce strategy. In fact, our suggestion for a pan-Canadian workforce strategy is one that's more the notion of a suite that enables us to set

the priorities, provide the resources, and target the accountabilities to take into account each of the regions of Canada as such.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So these labour market agreements right now are with each province. Would there be any value in talking about a pan-Canadian workforce agreement or understanding?

• (1620)

Mr. Gerald Brown: What we used to have at one time was that the federal government was responsible for all of this and worked with the provinces in identifying the needs in the area of workforce development, but the federal government was the one that controlled the budget. All of that has now been decentralized into the provinces, and as a result of that, I'm not sure who really has the hand on the rudder at this point. Each of the provinces, each of the 13 jurisdictions, has its own set of priorities, but I don't see a national one starting to emerge from all of that.

We're saying we think if that's the system that's in place—and it's probably difficult to change that—there's at least a role for the federal government to bring the parties around the table and agree on some sort of national priorities and areas that we need to address, and then move forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown and Madam Savoie.

We're going to now move to the last questioner of the first round.

Mr. Brown, you have five minutes.

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

If there is some leftover time, I'll be sharing mine with Ms. Yelich. I realize that we have to be quick and concise today with the two rounds.

I have two questions. The first one is for Mr. Kozij.

You mentioned the \$105 million recently referenced in the budget. Certainly that's good news for skills training amongst aboriginals. Could you expand upon that, how that's going to be funded given the immediate need? Is a larger percentage going to be released at the beginning of the five-year period?

The second question is for Mr. Brown, from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. I have a community college in Barrie, a very good one, Georgian College. I've done the tour and seen the infrastructure needs they have. I can certainly appreciate what you speak of, and that's one of the reasons I was so happy to see the \$800 million allocated in this year's budget for post-secondary education.

In your summary and recommendations you made reference to the fact that if we're going to solve this problem we really need to look at getting funding back to 1992 and 1993 levels, adjusting for inflation and demographic growth. I think that's an important thing to look at, because obviously there was a real pillaging in the mid-1990s of social transfers by the government of the day, in terms of education.

What were the effects of those cutbacks in the mid-1990s on the college system? Maybe you could let us know why there's such a need to invest today. Where did we fall behind in the mid-1990s, when the knife was taken to education on a community level?

Mr. John Kozij: Thank you for the question.

Just to reiterate, the \$105 million is going to the aboriginal skills and employment partnership initiative, which is an opportunity-driven initiative, nationally managed with support from our regional offices. ASEP, as we call it, will fund training up to 50% of the costs for large economic development projects, and will include a comprehensive pre- and post-employment training plan.

It's funded through contributions between HRSDC and partnerships with the private sector. In terms of the funding array over the years for the \$105 million, \$5 million will come in this fiscal year, \$30 million in the next, and then \$7 million over the remaining three years of the five-year plan.

Mr. Gerald Brown: Your question is very good and it allows me to draw the standing committee's attention to one recommendation I did not speak to, but it is in our brief of course, and that is the need for additional resources in the area of infrastructure.

Back in the nineties I was the president of a very large institution in Montreal, one of the largest CEGEPs in Quebec, and when we were going through the budget cuts, it was very clear we had a very important priority. The priority was to respond to the needs of our students, to provide the services they required, and at the same time, to respond to as many special needs as possible, such as the folks of this particular committee. So we put aside money to invest in buildings and equipment and infrastructure, and that went on for pretty close to a decade.

Now that we're back into the process of reinvesting in post-secondary education, we think some of the money needs to go there, but we're pointing out in our recommendations, both here and in front of the finance committee, that not only do we need to have the investment for post-secondary education that has fallen back since 1992 from the point of view of responding to the educational needs, but we also need huge investments on infrastructure in our buildings. God forbid the day a building collapses. We see what happens when a bridge collapses. You can imagine when a school collapses, and probably there are some institutions across the country in that situation.

From the point of view of the colleges, our investment is even more significant. It's one thing to prepare a classroom for humanities. It's a classroom, it's chalk, it's paper, and it's light, but when you have to do aircraft maintenance, it's a little bit more challenging. You need an airplane and you need a number of engines, etc., and this is true for all, whether it be in forestry or in fishery. If you're teaching programs in the fishery area, you need boats and so on. So the needs of our college system are far more significant, especially in that area. As we move forward to be part of that global economy, we need to make sure we train our people *à la fine pointe des besoins* of the industry that they need to teach and work in, so they're able to go directly into the workforce.

The college has a double whammy: the budget cuts that have forced us to move money away from our infrastructure and

maintaining our infrastructure, and then the very nature of our instruction—that because we teach skills training, we need to upgrade our equipment constantly.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and I'm sorry we're out of time.

We're going to move to our second round. Ms. Dhalla, five minutes, please.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Thank you very much, once again, to all the presenters, in particular Ms. Lewis. I found her presentation most interesting and insightful.

I wanted to touch upon some of the barriers that women from the first nations and aboriginal community face in particular, those with whom you work. Some resources were given. I know that with the Kelowna accord there would have been some resources and investments, money that would have filtered down, to ensure that these women could overcome some of the barriers they are facing and enter the workforce.

Could you describe to this committee what benefits the women from the first nations and aboriginal community would have received from the Kelowna accord?

Ms. Sherry Lewis: Certainly in the Kelowna accord there was lots of talk about investment, both on- and off-reserve, and so the benefits would have been broader than much of the focus that is primarily on-reserve. For us, because we know that a large number of aboriginal women are forced to leave the reserves for a variety of reasons, our area of expansion, our focus, is non-reserve or off-reserve.

Take housing, for example. They talked about shelters and transitional houses for the first time, and so there would have been benefits in terms of expanded supports that women could access as they were fleeing a variety of situations.

If you look at employment and training, there were lots of recommendations around learning centres and networks off-reserve or outside their original networks to build on the successes we see in studies. As we say, when barriers are limited or eliminated, aboriginal women lead the way in terms of successful graduates.

We are increasing graduates, but it does not result in higher-paying jobs, and so we see we need to focus at the time they are receiving their training and getting the skills they need. Why isn't this turning into jobs? That's part of the evolutionary piece we were talking about, and data is extremely important when we're trying to assess what kinds of changes need to occur to meet the new or current job market.

We find that many women are much more comfortable in home settings, so distance education was another area they were considering, so that women no longer had to leave communities, because we are finding that women experience the most violence when they leave the safety nets of their home communities. What we are finding in our Sisters in Spirit initiative is that women leaving for school are becoming targets because they are out, away from the safety of their home communities, and on their own, with little or no resources. This is why they talked about these learning centres, so they can begin to come together and talk about their common needs, how they can build those supports in terms of child care and helping each other that way, just that natural safety net that can occur.

The Kelowna accord had a number of those kinds of recommendations, and certainly we were hoping to have a lot more push or influence as it was implemented. We hoped there would be more gender-specific considerations or approaches and some of the standard recommendations you'd see in there.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I think that last night, when we had the vote and all opposition parties supported it, that was in light of the fact that it would have had a tremendous benefit and impact across the country and would have perhaps eliminated some of the barriers that women face. I know, having been born and raised in Winnipeg, that there's a significant first nations population there. I've had a chance to work with some of the women from the community.

Given this particular budget that has just come out, are there any types of resources that your organization and women across this country, especially from the aboriginal and first nations community, will be able to access to ensure that some of these barriers can perhaps be avoided, since we don't have the Kelowna accord?

• (1630)

Ms. Sherry Lewis: We're certainly hopeful that the investment in the ASEP program that was mentioned earlier will have some benefit, although there's no choice. They decide which jobs you go into, so that limits the choice. Most of those jobs are in areas that women don't traditionally choose, because they frequently involve fly-in and having to live there for two weeks. Those kinds of jobs change the whole child care issue into something quite different. Quite frankly, women are much more connected to the earth and their sense of belonging to the earth, and many of those jobs that are supported through ASEP are in areas that are harming the environment, so those jobs are not something that we find aboriginal women going towards.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I'll just ask this very quickly, because the chair is looking at me, and I've run out of time.

You mentioned many times in your presentation and in your answers to questions that you've requested documents from HRSDC in regards to gender-based analysis and some of the specific demographics. I don't know if the people from HRSDC could provide this committee with information as to why that information has not been provided to an organization like yours, which has been there helping women across the country since 1974.

Mr. John Kozij: It would be a pleasure. Actually—

The Chair: Could you give just a quick response?

Mr. John Kozij: We've looked at the results data. We've seen that about 50% of our clients are women, which actually suggests that both men and women are accessing AHRDS equitably.

In addition, we do support NWAC, the Native Women's Association of Canada, to do additional gender-based labour market programming. We also have a first nations/Inuit child care initiative bundled in as part of our program to help support women who face barriers to employment. Regarding the Statistics Canada data, it is broken down by gender. I'd be happy to share it with this committee at a later point.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for coming to meet with us. You really are an important source of information. I'd like to ask Mr. Dinsdale a question.

I met with people from your organization last summer, when I travelled to western Canada.

Where does your funding come from and approximately what is the budget at your disposal?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Dinsdale: The funding we receive from the Department of Canadian Heritage for our program is \$16.1 million annually. We give that funding to local friendship centres, and they leverage that into additional programs. So the total amount, \$89 million a year, is being spent in communities across the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Thank you.

Ms. Lewis, I read your 18 conclusions. I find some of them very interesting, particularly those concerning the mentoring programs and behavioural models. In my view, this is fundamentally important. The same is true of housing and providing educational material.

However, I was surprised when you said: "That government develops and encourages initiatives to implement an Aboriginal studies curriculum."

We're talking about the First Nations in the plural. There are a number of nations and a number of cultures, and so a number of ways to view life.

Is this a printing error, or do you really want only one educational program to be established for Canada's First Nations?

[*English*]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: Our recommendation centres around ensuring that young people hear a positive message about their culture and their history, and that the average Canadian has a better understanding of our collective history.

We see things like the land dispute in Caledonia. On the surface things appeared to be in harmony and to be going well, but the minute something occurred and we began to look at our inherent rights and at what came first, the chicken or the egg, then the surface began to bubble with racism. All of us have probably seen the various comments and things, so it's just below the surface.

Many Canadians believe that no racism exists in this country, yet we see it on the news almost every night. For us that's a clear example that if you don't understand how the treaties came to be—For example, a young person said this: my professor asked me about who has treaty rights here, and only the Indians put up their hands—but everybody has treaty rights, and the treaties are about sharing those rights. If you don't understand how those came to be, then some of the perspectives you see in the media are from an uneducated perspective. There's lots that could be done to share our mutual or collective history on how we came to share, and to live in harmony in, this part of the world.

So we think that's an important message out there, that we are being portrayed as a burden on this country, instead of our being the welcoming open hand when the lost people found their way here. That's a very different message.

When my children were going to school, they would come and say, it's aboriginal day and they want us to bring our artifacts in. So I told my husband he was going in, because he's the oldest thing I have in the house.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Sherry Lewis: So the perspectives out there are interesting, that people were just waiting happily to see the artifacts from a home that's no different from the one next door. We live in the same homes, but we just have a different world view. So we feel it's critical to learn and understand from each other if we're going to live in harmony—even when we have different perspectives.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Thank you very much.

I imagine the ideal would be for the 18 recommendations as a whole to be implemented. However, if you were to select three, four or five more important ones, which ones would you choose?

[*English*]

Ms. Sherry Lewis: Well, certainly increasing the funding is a priority. As our colleagues have said here, NWAC does have an AHRDA agreement, but it's a mere \$2 million. With that small amount of money, we contribute a large percentage to the 50% of women who have gained access. So as I say, when we ask them why we can't have access to the larger labour market, it's because we're there to enhance what the others do. When women have to be a primary consideration, we can no longer be an enhancement if we want to significantly change their life status in this country. So some priority funding would be nice.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

I'd like to touch on the issue of student financial assistance, because I think one of the most troubling parts of my portfolio has been meeting with a number of students who are facing crushing debt burdens. We've seen recent further support for RESPs, raising the ceiling and so on, which seems to benefit wealthier families while doing nothing to improve access. What we've been hearing is the need to ensure access, independent of the size of one's pocketbook.

I'm wondering if there are any comments from any of you about what could be done.

You've referred to some of those things in your recommendations, Mr. Brown, including grants for the first two years. What could be the federal government's role in that piece of it?

Mr. Gerald Brown: I think some of the issues before you in our brief speak to some of the key areas. The challenge we have with the student loan system that exists now in both Canada and Quebec is that it's a system designed for the sixties, but is now operative in the 21st century. So we tinker and tinker to the point where it becomes skewed. So I think it's important that we find a way to sit down—and this might in fact be an integral part of the pan-Canadian workforce strategy we talked about earlier—and find ways to look at that model with certain guiding principles, such as universality, portability, simplicity and rationality.

But the thing that concerns us the most, of course, is the student debt that's being accumulated and the impact it is going to have on the next generation. We know that students are putting off getting married—although that's à la mode these days anyway—and putting off starting their families and buying their first homes. All of this is impacting very significantly.

Interestingly enough, when you do the studies across the country, you notice that in Quebec, for instance, where the CÉGEP system is tuition free, the problems are exactly the same, because of all of the inherent costs around post-secondary education. So you can just imagine that in areas of special needs and other areas this standing committee is looking at, the challenge is even much more demanding. That's why for us the earlier question by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is a very urgent one.

The more we can move to grants and a system of grants, the more likely we're going to be able to reduce some of that burden.

• (1640)

Ms. Denise Savoie: Indeed. We've had governments that are very keen on paying the debt, and I certainly support that, but with no concerns about letting students get in debt to the tune, I think, now in Canada of something like \$20 billion, which is really horrifying.

I'd like to move on to the question of Indian and Northern Affairs and the interface with HRSDC. As I understand from speaking to aboriginal people, either on-reserve or off-reserve, there are many different reporting mechanisms and different agreements, with not much coordination between the two departments, which complicates things. For example, the money that's allocated from K to 12 comes from INAC and it doesn't allow for the funds to be applied to apprenticeship training. Yet we've heard today that there's a growth rate among your young people of something like 22% and there's a cap of 2% on the increase in funding.

So there are lots of questions there, about the cap, the lack of coordination, the difficulty with all the reporting mechanisms. Would you like to address any of those?

Mr. John Kozij: Certainly. I think all programs have a certain amount of reporting. I guess the question is whether the level of reporting and administrative work is such that it's a burden or normal in a certain accountability framework.

I think we're quite proud at HRSDC to have decided in 1999 to bundle a number of programs under one contribution agreement in the form of the AHRDA, the aboriginal human resources development agreements. When I say "bundle", that means that there's a youth program in there, there's a child care program in there, there's a persons with disabilities program in there, there's a labour market program in there, there's a capacity program in there, and there's an urban program in there, all in one contribution agreement—

Ms. Denise Savoie: I don't want to interrupt you, but what is the work you've done to coordinate the programs with INAC?

Mr. John Kozij: Let's say if we take a lifelong learning spectrum, INAC is responsible for primary and secondary education. We come in in the technical skills area, and then they come back in again in post-secondary education support.

If you'd like to talk to them about issues of primary and secondary education as well as about post-secondary education support, I'm sure they'd be quite happy to come here.

We play that role in the middle between high school and post-secondary education, and helping students make the transition to work into skills.

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

We're going to move now to our last person of this round. Ms. Yelich, five minutes, please.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Thank you. I will be sharing my time with my other colleagues here.

I actually have questions for every one of you, but I won't have time. I do want to go to Sherry, only because a couple of years ago I attended a conference here in Ottawa that had the women aboriginal entrepreneurs. It was really impressive. That function showed that if you empower aboriginal women, the sky seemed to be the limit.

I am wondering if you'd like to comment on whether one of the steps should be the matrimonial real property that we're looking at and trying to get through as legislation in the House of Commons. Would you agree that's a good first step to some of the issues that you have?

Ms. Sherry Lewis: As I've tried to explain in my presentation, there are broader determinants to employment success. You can't just rely on education or skills development alone to have the impact for aboriginal women. It is housing—she doesn't have any property protection on-reserve, so she is frequently having to start at a lower spot—no child care, and there are lots of other things. We want to make sure that those broader determinants—and for sure matrimonial real property on-reserve is one of the large ones. This has been going on for well over 30 years. Women have had to flee with absolutely nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I remind you that \$10 million went into the Status of Women, particularly for combating violence against women and girls.

I also agree with you that there aren't enough data out there. I think that's a complaint for aboriginal and non-aboriginal statistics.

The Chair: Mr. Chong, please.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a quick question for John Kozij.

It's about your presentation. On page 4 of your presentation, on aboriginal labour market development, it states: "...results indicate that known predictors of employment such as age, gender, educational attainment, family status, mobility and place of residence do not fully explain the employment gap."

I'm wondering if you could provide this committee with an educated guess as to what would explain the remainder of that gap. In other words, if the gap in employment is not fully explained by these normal predictors, what could explain the remainder of the gap?

• (1645)

Mr. John Kozij: I could speculate a bit, but I'd be even happier to share with you a study that we did that looked at some determinants of employment and that made that piece of analysis in terms of not being able to fully explain the employment gap.

What the authors said is they think it has something to do with residual issues around aboriginal awareness of employers and whether or not race is playing a factor with respect to people securing employment. That's why it is more important than ever for us to work more with employers to raise issues of aboriginal awareness and to make those worksites friendlier and more open to aboriginal people.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Actually, I just want to make a comment quickly about something Ms. Lewis spoke about. She was talking a bit about some of the challenges that some aboriginal women face once they have employment. I hear what you're saying. I can't imagine really what it would be like to be in that situation.

One of the great things about the tight labour market right now in northern Alberta, where my riding is, is that there is much more flexibility offered to workers right now in special circumstances because it is such a tight labour market.

I know from my own experience as a manager, and that of my colleagues at the Oilers in my previous life, before I was elected, that when we were flexible with our staff and took into account some of those unique circumstances that they had, they were happier and more productive in the long term too, and it allowed us to keep around valuable employees who had a lot to offer the organization. It sometimes just took a bit of a special accommodation, especially early on, to get to understand some of the circumstances.

That is just a comment of appreciation for what you had to say.

The Chair: Okay, we are going to have two more quick rounds.

Mr. Merasty, you have three minutes, and then three minutes will go back to the Conservatives, and then we'll finish up.

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very quickly, with the aboriginal human resource development agreements, I was around when the first One Agreement models were—away back when. Those are great. It would be nice to see huge investments in this area and build on those successes.

I want to follow up on Ms. Dhalla's question with the ASEP moneys, because \$5 million, \$30 million, \$7 million, \$7 million, \$7 million—that does not add up to \$105 million. Once we get around to that, maybe you can explain that. Maybe I misunderstood the breakdown.

With respect to the gender reports, perhaps we can get those. In what timeframe would we be able to secure them?

The ACCC is a great organization that we partnered with. I used to be chairman of SIIT and we hosted the big—I think we met there, actually.

With respect to NWAC, in my former position it was the women in our communities who carried the economy. They outnumbered the men in our area five to one in post-secondary training and employment. The need for child care, for transportation, and for other supports is absolutely critical and it must happen, so I applaud you.

I want to ask Mr. Dinsdale about friendship centres and their huge role in employability, which is what we are studying here. You've become, as friendship centres, the Jack and Jane of all trades in the urban areas. You are doing a bit of child care upgrading, employment readiness, resumé-making, employment training. You have an infrastructure where you can point to successes.

What do you think you would need in the next little while to actually build on those successes?

Mr. Peter Dinsdale: One thing we don't have is a formal relationship in employment training in AHRDS at all. We have no formalized relationship whatsoever. We think that the delivery infrastructure you talked about and the kinds of programs that are available in those community centres should play a vital role.

Frankly, you get access to 116 communities very consistently, very effectively, and very professionally. So what we would need is a willing partner, frankly, to have significant employment training prospects in urban areas for urban aboriginal people.

Mr. Gary Merasty: I think that is absolutely critical, because you're there and there are partnerships you've established. I see it, in my area at least, as a very valuable instrument that should be capitalized on.

Are my three minutes up?

• (1650)

The Chair: You have another 45 seconds.

Mr. Gary Merasty: Go ahead.

Mr. John Kozij: I'd like to clarify on the ASEP moneys: \$5 million this fiscal year, \$30 million the following fiscal year, and \$70 million in the three years remaining of the five years.

I have a point of clarification. The friendship centres are AHRDAs in some cases, in some urban centres. In addition, there are also subagreements—I know Peter knows that.

Mr. Peter Dinsdale: I don't think that was the question, sir. Frankly, I think he has asked us what we would need across the board.

We may have a partial agreement in one region. If you want to get into the technicalities of what that is, in Ontario we have an agreement under which people who do belong to a first nation in Ontario but are not affiliated with a first nation there have an opportunity to access an AHRDA in that community. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about full, open, and inclusive employment training opportunities.

Basically, if someone walks through our doors, they get transferred somewhere else because they're not a member of that group. So I appreciate the clarification, but I don't think that really gets at what I was trying to get to.

Thank you.

The Chair: It's always the follow-up questions that take us over time.

We're going to move to the last three minutes, and Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Dinsdale, you spoke a little bit about Alberta. I know that in northern Alberta, particularly in Edmonton, there are a lot of people taking a serious look at the win-win of offering opportunities to aboriginal workers and benefiting from the skills and hard work they can provide. It's something our mayor, Stephen Mandel, takes very seriously. I think of my foster brother Randy, who comes from a native background and is one of the hardest-working guys I know. He's working in the construction industry, and what he is able to contribute is just phenomenal.

Sometimes we're so focused on the problems that we don't take time to look at the good stuff. Maybe you could take this last moment to just speak on some of the success stories, some of the things that are actually working out there. I think that's a good place to finish.

Mr. Peter Dinsdale: One of the success stories is seen when we partner, either as first nation urban people or with women's associations or with employers, to have more successful outcomes. On our own we're silos, but when we better case-manage in communities and when we partner, as friendship centres, with other community agencies or other employment training partners, that's when we're going to have success, frankly.

We have to focus on education, as we do in Ontario. There are a bunch of alternative schools there that take kids who have dropped out of the public education system, get them back into the friendship centres and into schools, partner with local school boards, and actually graduate kids. They're getting those kids on into post-secondary educations.

There are some kids in downtown Toronto who were street kids. After two years of going through an alternative school program, they ended up getting into an access program at the U of T or into other programs, with Lori Budge, at Humber, and elsewhere. It's a tremendous success story.

If you want to talk about employability, I would argue that the number one priority this committee should have is single women with children. If you get that young mother graduated through a program and into a well-paying job, you change her life and you change her child's life. Having been raised by a single mother, I can assure you that this mother will not allow her child not to succeed. She'll know the benefits and what it takes, and it will be a remarkable outcome for all of Canada. That's what I would say would be the ultimate success story.

Mr. Mike Lake: Thank you all for coming. This was a good meeting.

The Chair: I would also like to thank our witnesses today. This is a very important issue, so we thank you for taking the time and for being flexible with your schedules in terms of finally getting here.

The witnesses are dismissed, but the members aren't. We have some business to take care of.

Thank you once again for being here today.

If we can move on, I believe we have a motion before us from Mr. Lessard, and the second thing we have is the fifth report of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure.

Mr. Lessard, we'll deal with your motion at this point in time, and then we'll deal with the timetable over the next couple of days, which is what the subcommittee on agenda and procedure meeting was about.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Fortunately, we're finally debating it. It concerns the Summer Career Placement Program, which has changed names.

Mr. Chairman, we all know the Summer Career Placement Program. That program has undergone some changes recently, not only with regard to its name, but also concerning its budget and, more particularly, the way it will be managed. It has been implemented with considerable delay this year.

It will result, if not this year, then next year, in a decline in the number of students who can be employed during the summer. It is therefore important that we make adjustments with regard to this program. That is why we have introduced the motion that is before you today and that reads as follows:

That the Committee recommend that the Government maintain, as is, the budget and format of the Summer Career Placement Program, that the Government transfer the administration of the program to the provinces that so wish, and that a report of the adoption of this motion be made to the House as soon as possible.

With your permission, I will speak to the nature of this motion.

With regard to the first part of the motion, I've previously said that it was important to protect this program, because it has the highest success rate. An analysis was conducted under the previous government, and the success rate, with respect to its objective, was 95%, which is not negligible. It is one of the most effective programs, but its survival is jeopardized every year. For example, provision has been made to cut \$10 million this year and \$45 million next year, out of a budget of \$97.5 million. That budget will be further reduced by 50%, which is simply not recommended in the circumstances.

The purpose of the second part of our motion is to proceed with the transfer. This comes in the wake of two trends, the first of which, which has already been implemented by the previous government, is to transfer management of the initiative to the provinces that so wish. As regards Quebec, all manpower training was transferred in 1997, except for three blocks that were reserved and that concerned Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and older workers. There were also immigrants, for a certain period of time. We think this transfer should be completed.

For the moment, the transfer of the Summer Career Placement Program should be made in that sense as well, particularly since the present Canadian government is jeopardizing it. That is why we have introduced this motion and we ardently hope that it will be carried by this committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lessard.

We have Mr. Savage, followed by Mr. Lake and Mr. Chong.

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you, Chair.

I entirely support the principle of the motion as put forward by Mr. Lessard, but I would have to vote against it as it is currently written. I would propose to amend it, if Mr. Lessard is agreeable to that. If he wishes to go ahead with it as it is, I would have to oppose it as is, and I would put my own motion on the floor after that.

The summer career placement program has been a phenomenal success in Canada, and I don't see any reason that any part of it should have been changed. It's been pulled back and re-gifted—we know that—but as it was, it was a hugely successful program that helped many Canadian students. As a by-product of that, it also helped a great many not-for-profit organizations, community groups that came to rely on that summer placement. Students found it useful and quite often found work in an area of their study, so it benefited in that way as well.

We definitely would support the motion if it were amended to reflect the fact that the summer career placement program as it existed before the cuts of last fall should be maintained.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Savage.

We have Mr. Lake, followed by Mr. Chong and Madame Savoie.

Mr. Mike Lake: Are we debating the amendment now? Is it an amendment, or are you discussing the motion?

The Chair: He has not put an amendment on the table yet.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay.

I want to talk about a few things. First of all, the first time I saw the summer career placement program as a member of Parliament, I was very surprised that we would fund businesses to hire staff during their busy summer periods. As I looked at some of the organizations that got funding, I thought, these are organizations that would otherwise probably be paying for their employees anyway, and I thought it odd that we would fund some of them.

In the case of some of the organizations I saw, it made sense. They're not for profit, and it totally made sense that there might be some kind of program. But I don't think Canadians want to see tax dollars subsidizing private industry when it has said it would create jobs in any event. I just don't believe in that.

As I understand it, the new Canada summer jobs program maintains 100% of the funding for the not-for-profit sector jobs, the ones Mr. Savage says are so important, and I'm sure those are the ones that are funded in his riding. What we're saying is that the Government of Canada has no business subsidizing business for the purpose of hiring people they would otherwise hire anyway.

We have some examples. I look at a company like Safeway, for example—and these are just a few examples of many—receiving a total of \$232,000 from this program, or a company like Wal-Mart receiving about \$266,000 from this program. With what's been done by way of changes in it, the Canada summer jobs program now, I think, is going to be more accountable; it's going to support the not-for-profit sector; it basically has preserved all of the elements that Mr. Savage has talked about.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mr. Chong, Madame Savoie, and Mr. Savage.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we should oppose this motion for two reasons.

The first is that this is a federal program. It's a program run by the Government of Canada, and to avoid a patchwork of programs across the country that have different standards and different criteria, I don't think we should agree to have it transferred to provinces that so wish it.

The second reason we should oppose this motion is that the original program, the old program, had some problems, and we had to change it. The new program is a significant improvement over the old. As my colleague Mike Lake just mentioned, a lot of major international companies that make billions of dollars a year received public money to hire staff.

I see the list here. Here are just a couple of examples that were pointed out to me by the government: over \$10,000 for Rogers Television; over \$24,000 for Ford Motor Company of Canada; over \$20,000 for Bacardi International, which is a major manufacturer of libations. Clearly these companies should not be receiving public money to hire people. They're for-profit companies that have a very good bottom line, and the money should be better targeted toward not-for-profit companies.

In fact, what the new program will do is target most of the funding to not-for-profit organizations. Significant moneys have been allocated for the government to do that. In excess of \$80 million this year will be allocated to companies to hire summer students. Specifically, the latest budget allocates \$77.3 million for not-for-profits, and \$8.6 million for public sector employers and private sector employers with fewer than 50 employees, so as to remove the criteria that allow a company with 50,000 employees, or over 100,000 employees, like some of the larger multinationals, to take public money to hire people when in fact they can do it on their own dollar.

For those two reasons, I think we should oppose this motion.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Some may argue that Ford has become a not-for-profit these days, so they may need all the help they can get.

Madame Savoie, and then I have Mr. Savage, Mr. Ouellet, Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, and Mr. Brown.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Savoie: To start with, the government should have achieved its objectives without cutting the funding of this program. However, I'm concerned, because I thought the committee had unanimously decided to review the criteria. Committee members agreed on the need to add certain criteria such as the high unemployment rate, the rate of violence and a few others.

I think it would be hard to say at this point that we don't agree on some of the criteria on which committee members agreed. However, I have some fears that these new criteria might be applied too narrowly. For example, in my riding, there definitely isn't any unemployment problem, but there is a poverty problem. So, if these criteria are narrowly applied, that will definitely cause a problem for young people looking for work, who are living in poverty and who are vulnerable.

In my view, rather than request that this program be cancelled, it would perhaps be preferable for committee members to agree to revise the criteria. Once we have seen it applied this year, we could meet to revise and re-evaluate the way it operated. I thought I understood what Mr. Chong said, as well as the people from the minister's office, who answered me that they had cut \$1.6 million and that the rest had been added. They specified that 77.3% would go to non-profit organizations and the rest to the public sector or to small business employers.

I wonder whether it wouldn't be preferable for the committee to simply request a re-evaluation of the program's operation at the end of the summer. Perhaps we could introduce another motion to that effect. I believe that committee members agreed that it would be necessary to change certain criteria of this program.

I'm interested in hearing the comments of my colleagues who were perhaps here and who perhaps read the previous reports, as I did.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Savoie.

We're going to move to Mr. Savage, followed by Mr. Ouellet, Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, and Mr. Lake.

Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: I can't speak to what the committee did; I wasn't here when the committee did their discussion of that. If there's an issue, if the government is saying there is a percentage of this money that's going to large corporations and that's not appropriate, then put that stipulation in the program—just put it in the program.

I wouldn't oppose that, and I don't think any Liberal would oppose that. I'll be honest with you: if Service Canada comes to me and asks what I think.... I've told Service Canada that I'm not picking winners and losers in my riding. I think it should be not-for-profit. I gave them the criterion that it should be youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, mental health issues, and there are two or three others. Not a single MP in the country knows every organization in their community. But it should be for not-for-profit. That's all I've said.

If the government has a problem with that, just say that it can't go to a multinational or national employer with more than 50 people. That's not a problem.

The point is that they've cut the amount of money. There will be fewer students hired. First and foremost, the program is to provide support in the summer for students who need to make money, primarily for tuition, and also to get some practical experience in an area of interest where they're doing their studies.

That's all that has to happen, and we wouldn't have a problem with that.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Ouellet, Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, and Mr. Lake.

Go ahead, Mr. Ouellet.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Ouellet: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I entirely agree with my friend Mr. Savage. If there have been any abuses in a few large companies, let's stop them; that's all.

In both my riding and neighbouring ridings, very few projects have been handed over to the private sector. You have to draw a distinction between those who work for large companies and those who work for small companies. It also has to be admitted that hiring a young person is not necessarily productive for the company.

Mr. Lake says there are abuses, and yet he has never hired any young people. Over the years, I hired young people to work at my architectural office. Those young people cost me more than the small amount I received from the government. Why? Because other employees had to show them the work; they had to be constantly coached. So it wasn't profitable.

Last year, people in my riding who produced water-lilies and water flowers received some projects. They had to take time to show the young people what to do. They learned to work, but these people didn't make any money.

As a general rule, the projects were mainly directed toward the NPOs, not to the private sector. I agree with Mr. Savage that the purpose of these projects is to show young people how to work, not for the private sector to make profits. It's a community-focused educational and support program. It's important that it be delivered as it previously was, because it's the people from the community who know the priorities best and who are best able to provide training to the right people.

There have definitely been abuses. No system in the world can prevent abuses. I note that the Conservatives would always like to prevent the slightest minor thing from going wrong, and that disappoints me. They'd like to have a perfect world. In a perfect world, another system would prevent abuses. However, that perfect world does not exist.

Why change a program that works very well and that the communities are satisfied with, and that they moreover expect to have? It's being almost completely cancelled so that it can be decided at the national level, at a level entirely beyond the scope of the people who know the situation in the ridings?

I think this motion is excellent. We have to go back to what was previously done. It was one of the federal government's good programs, so let's keep it.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I agree with Ms. Savoie. I think there were some problems. I think they were cited. In fact, I remember being at this committee when someone—and I thought it was someone from the Liberal side, but maybe I heard incorrectly—said they wanted to get away from members of Parliament directing where the money was allocated.

The changes in this program were made so that the allocations were based on clear and objective criteria. It was important to start changing the program to be directed, and not just to those who wanted to take advantage of the program.

I'm very surprised that you're jumping in on that argument when in fact you just finished arguing that you wanted to take it all home to Quebec, to your government. You're arguing now that it's all right. You're okay with the businesses being back and now having a different provision. So I'm not sure what you're arguing, then, because I thought the suggestion you wanted was that it go to the government and that the federal government not be handling it.

I don't know how we can prejudice the program. It hasn't even gone out there. I think we'll be quite surprised at how well it will work out. I think Mr. Savage should be very surprised, because I'm understanding that rural areas and more remote areas are going to benefit from this program. And I'm very surprised that there is any suggestion that it is anything but a better program.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

I have Mr. Lessard, Mr. Lake, and Madame Savoie.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Savage asked a question on an amendment. In the past three days, we've had to postpone all that. The difficulty concerns the transfer of management to the provinces that so wish. What is urgent is that we prevent the program from deteriorating. So I would be ready to accept an amendment to that effect. The part that calls for the government to transfer management of the initiative to the provinces that so wish could be deleted. If that suits Mr. Savage and Ms. Savoie, we would agree to that.

Furthermore, I would like to note here a few elements that are not consistent with what has happened. We already revised this program barely a year ago. The committee made 14 recommendations to the government, which did not consider them, which disregarded them. Are we going to do the same work all over? What are we doing here, Mr. Chairman?

I would also remind the Conservatives that, in the budget tabled this week, the government announces that it is ready to transfer all matters pertaining to employment training to the provinces. That means that this is also consistent with this concern, but I'm dropping this part.

What the Conservatives are raising is intolerable. We don't agree that it's Wal-Mart, Rogers or other large companies. This program was poorly implemented in certain places. In our ridings, it was properly implemented. It is false to say that it is us who choose. It's the public servants in the regions who choose based on applications. When we have to arbitrate choices, we can intervene, but it's first of all the public servants who choose.

Our friends here said so. It isn't because one part doesn't work or that someone did his job poorly that the entire program has to be thrown out. Let's take the following example: it isn't because a senior minister in the present government deceived the House that the House budget will be cut by 50%. The situation here is the same.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to hold it here.

The subcommittee has decided that we're going to meet on Tuesday morning from 9 until 12 and cancel the Wednesday and Tuesday afternoon meetings. So we will have only two meetings. That was a request from all the committee on all sides. I have the

agenda, and we'll have to look at it afterwards, because we're out of time.

We need to deal with this issue, Mr. Lessard. I have more people on the list, so my challenge is that we have a vote here.

Mr. Savage, if you'd like to at least make the amendment, we can discuss it when we come back next time. So the amendment just strokes out "that the government transfer the administration of the program to the provinces that so wish it."

Mr. Michael Savage: There's one other small change, that the committee recommend the government maintain the budget and format of the summer career placement program as it existed before the cuts of last fall. As it is, it's the reduced number.

The Chair: Can we call the vote?

An hon. member: We don't even know what the question is, so how can we call the vote?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, could you repeat the motion?

The Chair: Most definitely.

Mr. Savage, would you repeat the motion?

Mr. Michael Savage: That the committee recommend that the government maintain the budget and format of the summer career placement program as it existed before the cuts of last fall, and that a report of this adoption...etc.

The Chair: All right.

Madame Savoie.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Savoie: I would agree to cut the entire budget, without adjusting the format. You have to be consistent. I read one report saying that this committee agreed on certain changes that were necessary. I find it hard to see how we could now say that the same criteria should apply. That's tantamount to voting without really having thought about it. We all agree on this side that the budget of the Summer Career Placement Program should be maintained in full. That's what I would be ready to support right now.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Lessard, we have to wrap it up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, I invite our colleague to vote for Mr. Savage's motion as it stands, for the following reason. Our colleague says he does not object to someone changing the rules without debate. We move that the rules be maintained and that we then move on to the debate.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have to adjourn the meeting for now. We'll look at this on Tuesday when we meet again at 9 o'clock.

The meeting is adjourned.

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