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Mr. Dean Allison

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and to the motion adopted on May 31, the committee will now commence its study on the Canada summer jobs program.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank the officials—Ms. Jackson, Ms. Charette, and Ms. Shanks—who've come in today to talk to us. I believe they have an opening presentation.

We'll have you guys do your opening presentation—if people would put their BlackBerrys on mute, that would be great—and then we'll try to get in a couple of rounds of questions, probably two five-minute rounds so that we can get in as many questions as we can. We have a couple of other things on our agenda this morning, so we will be breaking promptly at 10 o'clock.

Ms. Charette, I believe you have an opening statement.

Ms. Janice Charette (Deputy Minister, Department of Human Resources and Social Development): I do, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

Let me start with some very brief introductions. I'm Janice Charette, Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. I am joined today by my colleague Karen Jackson, the acting senior assistant deputy minister responsible for the skills and employment branch at HRSDC, and Sharon Shanks, our director general of services for youth within Service Canada.

I'm here today to talk to you about the Canada summer jobs initiative. The new initiative provides wage subsidies to help Canadian employers create career-related summer jobs for students between the ages of 15 and 30. It is designed to create jobs that not only meet employers' needs but also benefit young people who need the jobs the most.

[Translation]

Canada Summer Jobs is aimed at helping thousands of students across the country secure high-quality, career-related jobs this summer. The initiative was set up to help young people not only find a job, but ultimately to get a good start on a career.

[English]

The program was created with three key objectives in mind: first, creating jobs that would otherwise not be created; second, helping

students who need it the most; and finally, providing high-quality career-related work experience.

Let me just start by setting some context around the labour market reality that lies behind these objectives. Right now Canada's economy is doing very well, and unemployment is the lowest it has been in 30 years. The Canadian labour market is performing well, and Canadian youth are benefiting from both the buoyant economy and the strong labour market. More than 60,000 jobs have already been posted at Service Canada centres for youth, and that was at the end of May.

In addition, experience with the summer employment programs indicates that many larger private sector employers would hire students without a wage subsidy. That's why private sector employers with more than 50 employees were not included in the Canada summer jobs initiative.

Let me go back to those three main objectives that I described earlier, first with respect to jobs not otherwise created.

There are three primary reasons for this focus. First, program evidence found that the public and the private sectors did not have as much need for a wage subsidy to create summer jobs. In fact, our data indicate that about 43% of public sector employers and 58% in the private sector indicated that they would have created jobs without a subsidy. Second, program evidence also revealed that some employers with access to other funds to hire summer students, such as multinational businesses, were receiving subsidies from the former summer career placement initiative. Our experience with summer employment programming also indicated that students considered their work experiences in the not-for-profit and public sectors to be quite valuable and career-related.

This initiative also encourages employers to help students who need it the most—those who would not find work as a result of where they live, perhaps because of the barriers they face, or both, in some cases. As well, it encourages employers to provide assistance to those areas where students are most in need.

This focus is important, because our program evidence showed that despite a strong economy, many students continued to experience problems in finding summer employment. In addition, some young people experienced higher levels of unemployment than others as a result of the barriers they faced. The unemployment rate, for example, for aboriginal young people was much higher than the 2006 national average of 12% for young people from ages 15 to 24. For example, aboriginal young people from ages 15 to 24 who are living off reserve in British Columbia had an unemployment rate of 20.4%, which is considerably higher than the 12% national average unemployment rate for youth in this age cohort.

Other young people faced barriers related to where they lived. For example, in rural and remote areas such as the territories, northern Manitoba, and some parts of Atlantic Canada, the overall unemployment rate can be 25% or higher, making it very difficult for students to find jobs.

[Translation]

Canada Summer Jobs focuses on creating longer, higher-quality, career-related job experiences for students. It is intended to benefit students by giving them skills for the future and letting them earn money for their education now.

[English]

Data we have from students reinforce the focus on career-related jobs. In fact, 55% of students who worked in the not-for-profit sector during 2005 reported that their summer job was related to their career choice and indeed confirmed their career choice. In addition, 74% of students who were employed by the not-for-profit sector indicated that their summer job would help them get full-time work in their chosen field.

Let me provide you with some information on the Canada summer jobs initiative budget. The budget for the initiative for 2007-08 is \$85.9 million, which I believe is what Minister Solberg said to you when he met with the committee on May 15, 2007. The full costs of this initiative will not be known until later this year, after the employers who are participating in the program submit all of their documentation to support payment at the end of the summer. Some organizations take a few weeks at the conclusion of the work term, and some even a few months, to submit that information. We are managing the resources for this initiative within the overall departmental resource envelope.

The Canada summer jobs initiative was designed to better suit today's economy and today's labour market. We introduced a set of fair, objective, and rigorous assessment criteria to assess proposals; however, as the program was being launched it became evident that a number of organizations, particularly in the not-for-profit and the public sectors, could not adapt to the new criteria fast enough. We did not anticipate the degree to which applying the new criteria would affect the not-for-profit and public sector organizations that had previously received funding under the summer career placements to deliver important services to communities over the summer.

So Minister Solberg asked us to do a review of the unsuccessful applicants that were not awarded funding in the first round of funding decisions. Obviously, this was a review that we did quite quickly, given that the summer was upon us and this is a summer job

program, and we concentrated on the not-for-profit and public sector organizations. The bottom line was to ensure that important services to the community were supported and that high-quality, career-related student jobs that would not otherwise be created would receive funding quickly. We took action there and accelerated the second round of project approvals and related funding decisions. In fact, we then called every organization that was either in the public or not-for-profit sector that had an eligible application under Canada summer jobs that had received funding under the former summer career placement program and had not identified or found alternative sources of funding. We were responsive to the concerns and we're confident that the initiative objectives that I outlined at the beginning of my remarks will continue to be met.

The Canada summer jobs program was designed to ensure students get the best-quality work experience, and the second round of project approvals will continue to ensure students receive worthwhile work experience. But of course, we're already in the conversation about lessons learned within the department, which you wouldn't be surprised about.

● (0910)

[Translation]

We've learned some lessons from our experience. For example, we have been reminded that not-for-profit organizations needed time to adjust to new program criteria, application processes and requirements to be able to submit applications of the required quality.

[English]

There's no doubt, though, that we listened and we responded quickly. We're going to continue to listen as we work with employers to finalize the job offers.

Let me return to the issue of funding, because I know that many of you will have questions about the program funding. I want to explain to you or reinforce that we are still in the early stages of implementing this program. We have many thousands of agreements that are in the process of being negotiated right now. As a result, it is impossible to put an exact figure on the cost of this program right now. As I mentioned earlier, exact funding will not be known until the end of the summer, because employers sometimes don't fill the positions that they apply for or offer them for as long as they originally intended. In some other situations, employers find alternative funding.

In conclusion, the Canada summer jobs program is a new initiative. It was designed to reflect a strong economy and a dynamic labour market. The program faced some challenges. We responded, and we will benefit from the lessons learned. The Canada summer jobs program was designed to ensure students get the jobs they need to help them succeed as students and prepare for future careers.

Thank you very much for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Charette.

We're now going to start with five-minute rounds of questions. We're going to start with Mr. Savage and work our way around. I believe we'll have time for two rounds of questions today.

Mr. Savage, five minutes, please.

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

I want to thank you for coming today as per our request to discuss this. I appreciate the acknowledgement of the mistakes that have been made in this program. I think we've certainly seen them at the community level. I don't accept that they were inevitable. Many of us had warned that these new criteria were going to be difficult for not-for-profits, but we certainly don't blame the bureaucrats in this process. Some ministers in the government have blamed the bureaucrats.

An hon. member: A point of order.

Mr. Michael Savage: Is that a point of order?

The Chair: No, I don't believe so, Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: I'm just looking for a headline that I can show you that verifies that. Perhaps I'll come back to that.

This program has caused a lot of concern in the not-for-profit community and for students, and it begs questions like this. If, for example, the purpose was to take out the large corporations, why wasn't that other money reallocated, as opposed to being chopped out of the program?

I want to ask you, first of all, how much money has been allocated so far on the Canada summer jobs program, and how much of that came in the last couple of weeks, as opposed to the initial funding allocations?

Ms. Janice Charette: I want to go back and acknowledge something you said in your opening remarks around the mistakes that have been made.

I think what I would suggest to you is that as we implemented this program, which is a new program, for the first time, we were trying to adapt going forward. So I think there were some consequences that were unanticipated and we tried to move quickly to react to those.

On the question you asked, I tried to address some of that in my opening remarks in terms of exactly the funding that's been allocated. Because this is a program that is administered across the country and there are somewhere in the range of 20,000 different contributions and agreements that are currently in the process of being negotiated, I can tell you with certainty that the budget for the program is \$85.9 million, but the actual funding commitments that are being made are in the process of changing basically every day. It is a combination of the agreements that are being negotiated as a result of the first round of funding decisions and the second.

So I can't give you an accurate, reliable—

• (0915)

Mr. Michael Savage: The reason I asked you is I have a letter here that deals with youth at risk that was sent to an organization that applied in my riding. It says:

Your application was assessed and received a rating of 23 out of a total of 70. It did not rank high enough to be in the list of assessed applications to be funded. Since the demand exceeded the budget, we are unable to offer you CSJ funding....

A week later, when a fuss was raised, they got the funding. They came to see me and this issue was raised in the House and everywhere else. And that seems to be the case more often than not.

So my question is this. How much was actually allocated, and how much then came back after people realized that this was a mistake? Just in general terms, if you could even give me a percentage, I'd be okay with that.

Ms. Janice Charette: How we would go about managing a program like this is we would look at a budget and say \$85.9 million. The first round of funding decisions was within that \$85.9 million. What happens in this kind of a program, though, and it's happened in the past as well, is that as we make a first round of funding commitments, employers come back to us and they say "Well, we actually can't use six students, we can only use four", so we—

Mr. Michael Savage: And a year has passed. But that's a very small amount, usually. In my riding, that would be one or two jobs in the entire riding. This is totally different, obviously. This is scores and scores of not-for-profits, and our concern, the reason we want the information.... And I don't accept the privacy argument that was given to this committee last week.

In years past, when it was more at the local control, whether you agree that MPs should be the ones making decisions or not, I understand that point of view from both sides. We knew back in May of last year who was going to be funded in our riding and who was denied. I don't see why we shouldn't know that same information in our ridings. As parliamentarians who represent the people in our constituency, I don't know why we can't have that information. It seems basic to me.

I'm going to give you a chance.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Michael Savage: This is the headline in *The Daily News*, Halifax: "Civil servants to blame for summer jobs cuts: minister", and that was Minister Peter MacKay, which I think is the height of abdication of responsibility. I don't think that's the case at all. This was a political decision.

So my question then goes back to giving me some percentage, if you could, respectfully asked. How many of these jobs were allocated, or dollars, initially, and how much came about in a sincere attempt to fix a program that was politically hacked?

Ms. Janice Charette: Again, there were a number of points made before you got to the end question.

One fact that might be of interest, Mr. Savage, regarding your comment about how that would be two jobs instead of one job in my riding is that one of the challenges in terms of our being able to come and give you the kind of information you're looking for at this point is that we're comparing to a program last year that was completed. I can look at last year and tell you what happened, because we have the data from the end of the summer. We're in the process of rolling this out, so I am going to try, to the best of my ability, to answer your question.

As I was saying in response to the earlier question, what we did is what we would normally do in a program. We would allocate up to the budget, in terms of the first round of funding decisions, against the criteria that were put in place for this program. So up to \$77.3 million for the not-for-profit sector was allocated on the same basis as was in place last year by province and by territory, and for the public and private sector the remaining \$8.6 million.

But as we go through, then, and speak to the employers, and they come back to us and say no, they're not actually going to use that many positions and so on, we then have an opportunity to commit additional dollars. As well, it is the case that when we make a commitment at the beginning of the year, in May, for instance, by the time the end of the summer rolls around we know that we won't have spent the full budget, for whatever reason—the student may have left; they weren't able to actually attract the student. So we over-commit the budget in order to ensure that we try to fully spend the budget.

Sorry, I have just one more point, if you'll indulge me.

In the course of last year, I'm told that actually we were making funding commitments continuing into mid-July, which obviously is not preferred, given the fact that we're into the summer and these are positions for students. So that's what I mean that as additional dollars become available we'll go out and make new commitments.

Mr. Michael Savage: I appreciate that. You get a lot more time than I do at this committee this morning, so I just want to close off.

The concern about not being able to find out what happened in our riding is a significant concern for a parliamentarian, especially when in the House of Commons the minister stands up, he has the lists, we know Conservative MPs have lists in their riding, the lists exist, and the minister will spout off who got grants in our riding, but he won't tell us, as MPs. Most of us know, because we're close enough to the ground to understand that, but we need to know that information. That is part of doing the job of being a member of Parliament.

I don't hold you responsible. I thank you for coming here today. But somebody's responsible. They're not in the room today—well, maybe four of them, but not the head one.

• (0920)

The Chair: Okay, we're going to move now to the next round.

We have Madame Bonsant. We're going to have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good morning, mesdames.

Here's the first question I wanted to ask you. Ms. Charette, were you responsible for the Summer Career Placement Program?

Ms. Janice Charette: I wasn't deputy minister of this department last year.

Ms. France Bonsant: Which means that you arrived this year, with the new changes.

Ms. Janice Charette: Pardon me, madam. I arrived in the department in July 2006, midway through the program, if I may put it that way.

Ms. France Bonsant: Did you take part with the minister in developing eligibility criteria, or what I call the "Solberg points", concerning the new organizations that were supposed to be entitled to that money for Canada Summer Jobs?

Ms. Janice Charette: Yes, I took part in discussions with the minister to establish the program objectives and also to establish the criteria that will be used to evaluate the proposals.

Ms. France Bonsant: We tabled 14 recommendations in the House. Have you considered the 14 recommendations that we adopted here in the committee, in which the word "crime" was not at all mentioned in encouraging people to hire youths? I think the term "crime" is unsuitable. It wasn't criminals we were hiring; it was youths we wanted to help. I want to know whether you are going to take the 14 recommendations into account next time.

Ms. Janice Charette: Could you repeat your question?

Ms. France Bonsant: Next year, to prevent a repetition of the kerfuffle we experienced this year, are you going to take into consideration the 14 recommendations that we tabled here in the committee?

Ms. Janice Charette: First, you asked the minister to give a response to the committee's report. I believe the deadline for that response is June 8. The government will respond to the committee.

Second, I can tell you that we reviewed the committee's recommendations.

With your permission, I'm going to speak in English and in French.

[*English*]

For example, one of the things the committee did recommend to us is that the assessment criteria be made more transparent and visible at the beginning of the application cycle. I think we've taken steps to do that with the applicant guide, which includes the assessment criteria and the waiting. I think there was a real interest on the part of the committee to making the criteria more sensitive to rural areas as well as to areas that are economically disadvantaged, and there was an interest in longer jobs.

That's just a couple of examples, Madame.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: There are 44 municipalities in my riding. The biggest town has a population of 6,700 inhabitants. I went to the downtown area of the queen city, Sherbrooke, where virtually all youths have had access to this program. My entire rural area has been penalized. So your criteria were not really worth much. I've also toured my riding with all the organizations. We worked on the regional plan to help battered women, persons with disabilities and so on. However, the Conservative government has accused me of helping my friends. I am happy to consider them as friends. I'm happy to help young students who want to help that clientele.

As deputy minister, will you have another \$45 million cut next year to penalize the same organizations once again? Is that in your criteria for next year?

Ms. Janice Charette: I must answer both questions. With regard to the criteria for next year, the minister has asked us to conduct a review of the program.

[English]

I think he's already said that publicly. He's asked us to do a review of the program to see whether the results were consistent with the policy objective. This is the first year of the program. The question of the budget for next year's program will be set by the minister next year. It has not been established at this point in time.

• (0925)

[Translation]

I would like to go back to the criteria question and how they apply in your riding.

[English]

I think there are 12 different assessment criteria. What we try to do with the assessment criteria is respond to the three different policy objectives. One of the policy objectives is creating jobs that would otherwise not be created. So you see, for example, the criteria around small urban, rural—

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Pardon me, Ms. Charette. I know the criteria and so on, and I don't doubt your knowledge. That has always worked. The program was not perfect, I can admit. It is constantly repeated to us that Wal-Mart and Rogers received \$265 million. I can hardly wait to see what party granted them those amounts and in what riding that occurred. It definitely isn't our party, because we have a lot of not-for-profit organizations that are having trouble making ends meet. Students are ready to take jobs at \$8 or \$9 an hour rather than go and work for Wal-Mart, as you would like. So the criteria are not the problem. I want to know how the Summer Career Placement Program, which was—

[English]

The Chair: Madame Bonsant, that's all the time we have.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: I can at least ask my question. I'm quite direct, so I'm going to ask my question directly.

[English]

The Chair: If you want to wrap up your point, sure.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: Why did you do that in Montreal, when there were Service Canada professionals who knew the places? We weren't working alone on that. There were Service Canada employees who knew the programs as well as I did. I want to know what kind of flip-flop you did with that, and why you centralized everything in Montreal rather than leave the centralization directly to Service Canada in the regions.

[English]

The Chair: A quick response, please.

Ms. Janice Charette: It's a long and complicated question, but I will try.

The criteria that were applied to look at all of the applications were the same criteria no matter where in the country these applications were being evaluated.

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

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): It seems to me that under the guise of trying to prevent political meddling, the way this program has been applied has really made it difficult for us, as members of Parliament who represent or try to represent constituents, to do our jobs. Not only can we not get some of the information we've asked for, but in my case in my riding, at the opening of the student placement office Service Canada told us directly that a directive from the minister's office disinvited local MPs.

There's a level of pettiness here that I think goes beyond trying to keep politics out of a government program. As representatives, I think we need to know what's happening in our riding, how these programs are functioning, and how the offices are dealing with students. This is just not possible, given the centralization that's occurred here. The whole centralization from Ottawa seems to be a real problem, for me.

The grid, as I read it, seems to really contradict the recommendations. As my colleague just said, I don't think there was ever a recommendation from the 38th Parliament for an overall cut of the program. The minister at the time said we're going to refocus the program to better direct the funds. Refocusing doesn't involve cutting.

You mentioned the highest level of employment or the lowest level of unemployment, but there are a lot of very low-paying jobs right now that mask.... We get the impression that the unemployment level is very low, but I think the very low-paying jobs are part of that and mask the real numbers.

The question I have is: would you agree that the grid contradicts the recommendations made by the 38th Parliament? Take, for example, the high crime. Well, sorry, rural areas get zero, because they're low-crime areas. The visible minorities in many rural areas...? The visible minorities live in Toronto or Montreal, so we've been hearing a lot about that.

There seems to be a real contradiction.

The other question is, you say you can't tell us how much was allocated in the first round. That seems to me very problematic. How would you know to go to a second round, if you can't tell us how much came out of the first round of applications to start with?

• (0930)

Ms. Janice Charette: I am here to answer your questions as best I can about how the program is being administered. The government will respond to the report of the committee on the summer career placement program. In questions about why things are done, you're asking for my opinion, and I don't think it's appropriate for me to give you that.

I can tell you that one of the big choices in terms of program administration is around budget alloc—

Ms. Denise Savoie: No, I was asking whether the grid, as it was, contradicts the recommendations. I think that's a fair question for a professional.

Ms. Janice Charette: What I'm about to explain to you is how we allocated the budget, which is what I think lies at the heart of some of the committee's recommendations.

There are two choices about how you would allocate a budget. You would try to do it on the basis of a formula that would take into consideration a number of different factors. The committee has indicated that rurality was one of them, and economic disadvantage. There were other members of Parliament who have talked to us in the past about the challenges of trying to find summer employment in areas of high crime. So the question is always to try to find the balance between all of those different factors. You try to do it *ex ante*, before you see the proposals.

What the government chose to do in this case was to put in place an allocation formula that allocated funding on a provincial-territorial basis for the not-for-profit sector, a national basis for the public and private sector, and then had a set of criteria that tried to rank proposals against the policy objectives, which include the economic conditions within an area but also the nature of the job that was going to be offered to the student, as well as the kind of barriers a student might face in getting a position. All of those factors were taken into consideration among the criteria.

So there is a choice. The government made a choice in terms of how it allocated the budget, and I expect if you wanted to talk a bit more about why that choice was made, the minister would be in a better position than I to talk about it.

The Chair: That's all the time we have. We'll have to get you in the next round, Madame Savoie.

We'll move now to the last questioner of the first round, Mr. Brown, for five minutes, please.

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

There have been references to the list the minister supposedly had. There's a big difference between mentioning a sampling of decisions and asking for a full list. We have the Bacardi grants in Ms. Dhalla's riding, and Wal-Mart. Those are examples, not a full list.

I would like to congratulate those involved in this program on the civil service level, because this is a first year with new priorities. When you change, adapt, and improve a program, that transition year can have some challenges, and I think you've handled it well.

I want to look at the 12 criteria and how they have changed from different years. I know there's been a lot of defence of political meddling and the old system of standing up for big conglomerates—standing up for MPs dictating to have grants go to their ridings. I have the list here, and I'd certainly be interested in which of these 12 criteria the opposition don't support. To help understand why they oppose these 12 criteria, it would be good to get some information on how it used to be.

They include jobs being created in geographic areas with high unemployment rates—hopefully they're not against that; jobs in small, urban, rural, or remote areas; project activities directed towards members to support the vitality of official language minority

communities—I certainly hope you don't oppose that; employers committed to hiring priority students; jobs in high-crime areas; employer focuses on the provision of services to persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, aboriginal persons, members of visible minorities, persons who are homeless or street involved, other groups with social employment barriers, children or seniors, environmental protection or other priorities—hopefully you're not against those criteria.

The job must provide clear related experience or early work experience; the job provides employability skills; the employer provides supervision and mentoring; duration of the job contributes to the student's experience and income; the salary offered contributes to the student's income; and finally, the job is associated with a special event, is a unique work experience.

When I look at these criteria I am very impressed at how in-depth this program is with these new changes. It really focuses on areas of need, on areas or communities that need a helping hand from the government. It doesn't go back to defending political meddling and standing up for the Bacardis and Wal-Marts of the world.

Maybe you could shed a little bit of information on how these criteria have changed from previous years.

● (0935)

Ms. Janice Charette: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

I'm not going to get into the preamble part of your comments. I don't think that was intended for my response.

On the criteria, there are a couple of things. This is the first time we have put this kind of comprehensive applicant guide together. One of the things that accompanies a new program is a move to these more rigorous and objective criteria to be able to do the evaluation. As I said, we changed how the budget was allocated so we needed to have a way of assessing the projects. The criteria were developed based on our experience with the program and looking at the recommendations of the committee.

In past years, even the committee indicated to us that the way the proposals were being assessed wasn't sufficiently available to the people who were applying. We had an applicants' guide, but they weren't necessarily able to understand completely how the decisions were being taken. That's why so much effort went into actually putting together the 12 assessment criteria with the level of detail associated with each one—the points. For example, within the high unemployment rate there are one to 12 points, depending on what the youth unemployment rate is in that region.

The availability of accurate labour market data was an issue for the committee, so we tried to gear the assessment criteria to the best available labour market data for the folks who fell into this cohort.

We took the policy objectives, aligned the criteria against those policy objectives, and tried to do a weighting that looked at those three objectives: conditions in the area that might inhibit a student from being able to find a job, jobs that wouldn't otherwise be created without this kind of a program, and the high-quality work experience. That really was the logic and rationale behind the criteria.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Okay. I just want to get two more quick questions in.

You say it's the first time there's been a guide put together. How did organizations know what to say to prove that they were giving quality work experience in previous years?

Second, I understand that Mr. Savage, in a press release yesterday, said that he wanted to know the reasons why unsuccessful applicants were denied funding. This program was administered over the last ten years, and I'd be interested in knowing if that was something that was given every year.

Also, when MPs decided, did MPs provide the department, which had the ability to disburse, with why they picked and chose organizations, what the reasoning was? You know, in the interests of parity, I'm sure Mr. Savage would have done that and provided information on why he rejected applicants.

The Chair: About 20 seconds for a response.

Ms. Janice Charette: Oh, God.

This is the first time we have done a guide. We are trying to provide information to applicants about how they did relative to the criteria. We provide them with an assessment. We're also offering them a follow-up if they want to actually understand how they might go forward next year and perhaps provide us with additional information that will allow them to score higher.

I think that is one of the challenges that came out in our review. Organizations may not necessarily have understood the change in the new criteria, despite the fact that I thought we tried to do a proactive outreach. The information was available on the Internet. A comprehensive applicants guide is available to members of the committee, if you'd be interested in it.

I think we still have a challenge in terms of making sure that organizations are able to demonstrate to us, for example, the quality of work experience around supervision or mentoring. I don't think that was featured as much in previous applications.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Thank you very much for taking the time to come today.

For many of us sitting around here, we've been raising this issue for a number of months now. I'm going back to some of the press releases issued by my colleague, I know, on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

One press release, dated March 5, states: "Conservatives' Student Employment Con Job". Another one, dated May 16, states: "Conservative Cuts to Summer Grants Kill Community Programs". And another one, on May 23, states: "Solberg Must Immediately End Confusion Surrounding Student Summer Grants".

So I know there has been a lot of work done by opposition parties to ensure that the students and the non-profit organizations that deserve funding actually receive appropriate funds to ensure that students can get hired for the summer. I can tell you, from talking to many of these organizations and these non-profit groups that traditionally have relied on the summer career placement program in the past, that they were actually counting on the Canada summer jobs program this time around to ensure that they would have access to the appropriate funding, and students would have access to ensure that they would actually obtain jobs.

So I was quite surprised, when we had submitted a motion, which I think was approved by the majority of members on this particular committee, to request a complete list of criteria....

How is it that in the past, MPs were provided with a list of individuals and organizations that had applied; the information came back from HRSDC itself on whether or not those organizations, non-profit or private, had been approved or denied; and we as parliamentarians had an opportunity to look at that list? I know, from talking to many MPs, that there was no involvement from the local MP. They took the advice of HRSDC.

Why is that when that same list is being asked for this particular year, it's been deemed a privacy concern, when in previous years it never was?

● (0940)

Ms. Janice Charette: Thank you for raising that, because I think I've heard the reference to privacy and lists a couple of times.

In my response to Madame Lafrance and your motion, I think there were two parts to the motion that I tried to respond to. The first one was with respect to organizations that were denied funding, in that case, as the committee even indicated in its opening paragraph, "subject to private considerations".

The second part of the motion has to do with the organizations that were funded. I think your question is about organizations that were funded. Am I correct?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Funds were denied.

You would know, as deputy minister—and you have a great team at HRSDC—that in previous years we received a list of every organization that applied for funding within our riding. We received a very detailed list, actually.

I'm just going to use an example of an organization that would apply for \$50,000 for x number of spaces. They would receive \$20,000, as a recommendation. Or they would be denied completely, or they would perhaps receive the full funds.

When that was not a privacy concern last year or the year before or for the last ten years, why has it suddenly become a concern in regard to privacy?

I have organizations in my particular constituency calling me and saying, "Can you please provide us with additional information? Because we are not able to get help from Service Canada or HRSDC." They are looking at us not as a Liberal MP or a Conservative MP or a Bloc MP. They are looking at us as links between what's going on here in Ottawa and what's going on, on the ground. They are upset, they are frustrated, and they are angry, because they feel as if they are boxed into a corner, and they don't know which way to turn.

And it's unfortunate for these types of petty politics to be taking over the good work that many of these organizations are doing.

So why is it a privacy concern now versus the case in the last five or ten years when it wasn't a privacy concern?

Ms. Janice Charette: Ms. Dhalla, I feel quite uncomfortable with the allegation that the department is engaged in petty politics.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I never made those allegations. Never.

Ms. Janice Charette: Sorry. Perhaps I misunderstood, then. Okay.

There were over 31,000 applications that came into this program. We evaluated those against criteria in four weeks. A first round of funding decisions was made. A review was done, and a second round of funding decisions was made.

• (0945)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: But I'm asking about the privacy.

Ms. Janice Charette: On the denials question, there is a difference between Service Canada and the department's sharing of information with a member of Parliament in the kind of dynamic that you described, and our tabling information publicly. Members of Parliament have different protections under the Privacy Act from what would be the case if we were to make the information public.

What I was trying to underline in my response—and perhaps I wasn't sufficiently clear, and I apologize if that's the case—was that for us to go and provide you with a list of organizations that did not receive funding in 2006... First of all, it wouldn't be our practice to publish that kind of a list. That was the first point I was trying to make.

If we were to do that and publish that kind of a list in response to the committee, we would have to go through the list against privacy considerations. For example, we would not be able to release the name of a sole proprietorship. We'd have to go through the list item by item. There are probably about 10,000—

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: But why did we receive that list last year, because—

The Chair: Okay. That's all the time. That's just over five minutes.

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

[*Translation*]

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

First, I want to thank the departmental people for being here today. You have a heavy responsibility. I think that responsibility also requires that you be able to give the most appropriate information possible.

To a question asked by Ms. Dhalla, you answered that you weren't engaged in politics. Earlier, however, you said that the minister had asked you to revise the criteria in order to see whether they were consistent with the political objective. You can reread the blues. So what you are engaged in is politics, whether you like it or not. That's not a criticism. It's a political gesture from the moment you apply political directives. Once again, that's not a reprimand, but you have to admit the truth: you play a political role.

Now the point is to see whether or not you're playing a partisan political role. In the current sequence, I would say to you that it's perceived in the field as a partisan political role. That's not because I want it that way or because I'm talking nonsense to you this morning. That's not my intention, because I know you work very hard. In the field, however, an improvised, deceitful, amateur operation is emerging. Not only is there a lack of transparency, but you're combating transparency. I'm telling you that quite honestly. Does that come from a political directive? That's another question.

I'll support my comment as follows. First, in the past, you wrote and signed this letter. From the start to the end of operations, you denied us information that we had on a de facto basis, that is to say who applied for it, who received it. The officials in the regions did their job well. It is false to say that there were no criteria; there were. The fact that you established criteria for the first time is another matter, but there were criteria and they were met.

Second, I'm talking about deceit. Here we were told the reason why...

It really irritates me when people talk off to the side. Pardon me, Mr. Chairman, but people were talking very loudly off to the side.

• (0950)

Why did they suddenly change all that, and why is it centralized in Montreal and Ottawa? We're told it's because there are ridings, regions where jobs are given to businesses like Wal-Mart, Rogers, Softway and so on. People are stunned and scandalized. They don't agree. Where is that happening? Why? If that's what we wanted to correct, as my Liberal colleague said a little earlier, why didn't we do it instead of throwing out the baby with the bath water? That's what you're also giving us this morning. That's why I say there's a kind of deceit. Perhaps it's not voluntary, but there is deceit.

It's the same program, even though the contrary is being claimed. It's been disguised, its name has been changed, and alterations have been made to certain criteria which amount to the same thing. It's not because a business changes the way it operates that it's no longer the same. It remains the same business. It's especially the places that have been changed in order to meet the selection criteria.

People are playing politics with that. Mr. Blackburn went into the ridings to strut and say that he had given those organizations a certain number of employees. Mr. Paradis did the same thing in Lac Mégantic, and they're doing the same thing in Sherbrooke and Victoriaville. He stopped doing it when organizations told him that they had some before and asked him why they didn't have any more now. People are playing politics with that, which we didn't see before. You must know that, when you're asked to work differently, you're being asked to play politics differently. You don't perceive where you are.

In the letter that you signed, madam, you tell us that, as a result of the Privacy Act, you cannot provide us with certain information that we previously had.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Lessard, that's five minutes; that's all your time. We're going to move on to the next questioner.

Madame Savoie, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

I'd like to go back to an issue that was raised earlier. Many applications at the first round received letters saying they were 23rd out of 70, 31st out of 70, 35th out of 70, and therefore they could not get funded. What happened between the first round and the second round? Were criteria changed?

I think you mentioned that applicants just didn't know how to write out the application. I think that was one of your earlier comments: that they were confused.

There seems to be something chaotic that happened here. I've heard—and first, is it true?—that every non-profit group that received funding last year will receive funding this year. I've heard from some groups that were rejected, and then approved, and then in the same day their funding was reduced. I've heard from one group in an urban riding that had never received funding before, and yet one phone call from an MP to Service Canada resulted in the money flowing automatically.

Was it really this chaotic? That's the impression the public has, and it's the impression we have as MPs. There seemed to be utter chaos from the time these applications began to come in and the first round was refused.

Ms. Janice Charette: We had a first round of funding decisions that were taken and were communicated at the end of April and early May. As a result of that, we heard, from quite a number of organizations that had previously received funding under the summer career placement program, but who didn't have enough points to receive jobs in the first round of funding decisions, the level of concern about the impact on their services.

I think one of the successes of the Canada summer jobs program is that we see that the jobs students were being given as a result of the

first round of funding decisions were longer, and the amounts that are being paid on a per job basis, therefore, are higher. That meant that fewer organizations were able to benefit, despite the fact that the budget for the not-for-profit sector was maintained, at just over \$77 million.

On the basis of hearing the number of organizations that were not successful, the minister asked us to go back and do a review. When we saw the number of organizations in the not-for-profit and public sector who had benefited in the past from the summer career placement program but who were not successful under this program, the minister asked us to accelerate a second round of funding decisions with criteria.

That gets to the point asking about what kinds of criteria were in place. We did look at organizations; we targeted the second round of funding decisions to organizations that had benefited in the past in the not-for-profit and public sector—

Ms. Denise Savoie: So all of the non-profits funded in the past were funded this year?

Ms. Janice Charette: For organizations that were eligible under the Canada summer jobs program—so they had submitted an eligible application—who had benefited in the past in the not-for-profit or public sector, and who in response to calls from us indicated that they had not identified alternative sources of funding, we're in the process of negotiating funding agreements under the second round of funding decisions.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So it's all of those.

Does this suggest to you that there's a very strong need for review of these criteria and the way they're applied? If groups—for example, in the case of autism, a soccer club that offers jobs for at risk kids; the Autism Society; students who need it the most, but face certain barriers; or one group here that didn't get funding, an amateur aquatic club.... That suggests to me that there's either a problem with the criteria or with the way they're applied, if all these kinds of groups did not receive funding, and that maybe the funding package was inadequate the first time and therefore the cutting of the overall budget was inappropriate. It has to be one or the other.

• (0955)

The Chair: There's about 40 seconds left.

Ms. Janice Charette: It's hard to respond on the specifics without seeing the application, but I think one of the things we've been reminded of is that when introducing a new program, particularly a program that applies to the not-for-profit sector, which is so broad across the country, we have an extra burden to make sure they're aware of the criteria that are going to be used and how best to apply. That's one of the things the minister has asked us to look at in the review of the program he's asked us to do.

Did the criteria actually support the policy objects? Were they applied fairly and consistently across the country? Did we get the results, which we'll only know at the end of the summer?

But I think the interaction with the not-for-profit sector and the public sector is certainly something we have to look at going forward to make sure they have as much information as they need to complete an application for this kind of assessment process.

Ms. Denise Savoie: So I guess you could suggest there are problems with the criteria.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're going to leave it at that.

We're going to move to the last questioner of the second round and we're going to have Mr. Lake. Five minutes, please.

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

I know that I have a short time for questions here, Ms. Charette, but did you have something else you wanted to add regarding Ms. Dhalla's concerns about privacy as it relates to the public release of information? I'd like to hear a little bit more, if I can, about that and your concerns.

Ms. Janice Charette: If it would be helpful to Ms. Dhalla.

Mr. Mike Lake: Yes.

Ms. Janice Charette: When I was answering Ms. Dhalla's question, perhaps I wasn't clear enough. There is a difference between how a department communicates with a member of Parliament one to one—and there are certain provisions within the Privacy Act to allow that—as opposed to releasing a list publicly. That's what I was trying to differentiate between. So the reason why that information may have been shared with you in the past, one to one, is because of the provisions that allow for that. If we're going to release a list of organizations that were not receiving funding last year, we'd have to go through the list, which is over 10,000 organizations, and apply a different set of criteria under the Privacy Act. That's what I was trying to explain, if that's helpful.

Mr. Mike Lake: I have a question to do with the previous program. Were there any good, worthwhile groups that did good things and that didn't receive funding when they applied for it under the old program, or did every single group that asked for things that did good things for people get funding under the old program?

Ms. Janice Charette: There are two things that I would say. Programs like this are almost always oversubscribed. It's true that last year we had 39,000 applications, and as I said to you, there were about 10,000 organizations that didn't receive funding. That's not to say that they weren't good organizations with quality applications. The same is true this year. Because we're still in the process of negotiating agreements, I can't give you the numbers yet.

The other thing I think I would mention is that my systems indicate to me that last year organizations applied for somewhere in the range of about 111,000 jobs overall. We were able to fund just over 44,000. Part of the challenge with a program like this is there's a lot of demand, there's a lot of really great organizations that do great work and deliver quality jobs, and how do you make choices? That's the reason for the criteria we're trying to set up: it's in order to try to help make the choices based on what we hoped were rigorous and

objective criteria. That's certainly something we need to look at in the review.

Mr. Mike Lake: Is it fair to say, though, that while Ford and Bacardi and Wal-Mart and Safeway were getting funding under the old Liberal program, there were some good organizations that weren't getting funding? Just a yes or no.

Ms. Janice Charette: I'm not suggesting that those other companies are not good organizations.

Mr. Mike Lake: I was quite surprised, as an MP, when I was asked to give input on this program. I never expected a phone call to pick winners and losers in a program. I meet folks all the time from my riding who come from places all around the world where political corruption abounds. They come here to get away from that political corruption, and it just seemed to me that when I hear about a program where MPs pick winners and losers like this, it just seems to lend itself very much to potential for corruption. It does. I think these changes are long overdue, where we need to have objective criteria, where the MPs aren't in the mix in terms of picking this. Can you imagine if we allowed the MPs to pick winners and losers in taxation casework or immigration casework or pension-related casework? I just can't imagine; I wouldn't want that kind of input. To have that kind of input here just doesn't seem consistent with the way we operate in this country.

I'm curious, when an organization, for example, under the old program was making a case for the quality of their jobs, would they make their case to the department or to the MP directly?

•(1000)

Ms. Janice Charette: I think the applicant would have submitted an application form under the summer career placement and the decisions were made on a combination of the information that was submitted through that application as well as local input from the members of Parliament.

Mr. Mike Lake: So they could appeal to their MP, and then when the MP substituted his or her own organization for one the department had proposed, would the MP send out a rejection letter to that organization that was rejected to state the reason for it?

Ms. Janice Charette: The department is responsible for the administration of the program, so the decisions with respect to who was receiving funding and who was not were decisions that were taken, ultimately, by the department.

Mr. Mike Lake: Were the criteria that the MPs applied when they rejected an organization that had been previously proposed by the department made public under the old program?

Ms. Janice Charette: It was not made public by the department.

Mr. Mike Lake: So the organizations wouldn't have had a letter from the department saying that their MP had actually overruled the department to tell them to reject them for funding. That wouldn't be stated in the letter in the old Liberal program?

Ms. Janice Charette: No, Mr. Lake, that would not.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay. I just wanted some clarification.

Were the criteria, for example, in Trinity—Spadina the same when Tony Ianno was the MP versus when Ms. Chow was the MP? Would you have had confidence that Mr. Ianno and Ms. Chow were applying the same criteria in their decision-making?

Ms. Janice Charette: I could tell you that the department would have applied the same criteria. How the members of Parliament were acting I think is really not a question that's appropriate for me.

The Chair: Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. Lake.

I want to thank the department officials once again for making time to be here.

Did you want to thank them as well?

Mr. Michael Savage: I want to thank the officials. I think the officials have provided us with great clarity today, as much as they are under constrained circumstances.

I want to introduce a motion that I understand from the clerk is in order. I wonder, could I pass that out, or read it? What's the best way?

The Chair: Sure. We will pass that out.

Can we let the department officials go at this point?

Mr. Michael Savage: Yes. It's just that I understand that the motion needs to be done while we're on the study of—

The Chair: Oh, most definitely. While we're still on the study, we'll entertain the motion

We'll release the witnesses. We thank you for being here.

Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: On a point of clarification on what Mr. Lake was saying earlier, the lists in the past were based on the advice of HRSDC. I know, as a parliamentarian, when I received the list I basically went back to HRSDC and said we would follow whatever the recommendations were. As MPs, we were in no way engaged in determining who would be eligible and who wouldn't be eligible for funding.

Mr. Mike Lake: Well, I—

The Chair: We're into some debate here, but go ahead, Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I want to know if the new Conservative policy is that members of Parliament aren't supposed to have any input in programs. If that is the case, then why bother coming to Parliament? Why bother coming here? There's no point, then.

The Chair: Okay, thanks.

Mr. Savage has a motion on the table.

Would you like to read that, sir, so we can begin some debate while we're still within the summer jobs program?

Mr. Michael Savage: I move that the Department of Human Resources and Social Development be ordered to provide the clerk, no later than June 12, 2007, a list of organizations that were granted funding along with those that were denied funding under the summer career placement program in 2006 and the Canada summerjobs program for 2007; the amount of funding distributed by the summer career placement program for 2006 and the Canada summer jobs program for 2007; and that this information be provided on a riding-by-riding basis.

Mr. Chair, if I could speak to this....

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Michael Savage: This arises out of a significant concern I had from an original motion brought forward on May 17 requesting this information by June 1. Last Thursday the chair told us we would have that information on Friday. It came in late on the day it was due and basically indicated that with one small exception this information couldn't be provided.

I want to refer people.... If you would just pull out your Marleau and Montpetit, on page 864 it says—

• (1005)

Mr. Mario Silva: I have it memorized.

Mr. Michael Savage: On page 864 it says:

Ordinarily, committees are able to obtain the documents they require for their work by simply requesting them. Where a committee meets with a refusal to provide a document it deems essential to its work, the committee may pass a motion ordering its production. If such an order is ignored, the committee has no power to compel its production, but may report the matter to the House and request that appropriate action be taken.

I have two concerns here. One is that as members of Parliament we have always had access to this information. In fact it was last year, on May 6, that Service Canada sent me a list of who had applied, who was going to receive funding, and who was denied. That is my job as a member of Parliament to know that. Service Canada, at the local level, knew that information. As Ms. Dhalla said, we don't pick winners and losers. I never did. I never thought it was my job.

The other day I was listening to a radio station in Newfoundland where a Conservative member of Parliament, Fabian Manning, said:

There was an attempt this year...to take this program, I guess, out of the politicians' hands. And, to be honest with you, I certainly disagree with that, because I think that nobody understands, you know, the riding as much, as a matter of fact, as the local Service Canada offices, the organizations that are out there, and the MPs in that regard, travelling around.

I have a concern from a privacy point of view, but I don't think this is about privacy. I think this is about disarray, disorganization, and the complete discombobulation of this program. If it takes this motion to force this issue—and I understand the motion is in order—then I think that it's up to us, as parliamentarians, to support that motion and do our job.

The Chair: Okay.

We have some comments on this. I have Ms. Yelich on the list, and then Mr. Lake.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Well, given the deputy minister's comments about privacy concerns, would we then have to have this in camera so this document does not become public? She said the members of Parliament are privy to this, or can see these lists.

We definitely have to have it in camera so it is not a public document.

An hon. member: No.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Well, she said it would become a public document. So it has to be done in camera.

The Chair: Well, I guess the question is are you proposing an amendment to this motion?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes.

The Chair: So would you like to let us know what that is?

Mr. Lake, do you want to talk? You're on the list.

Ms. Yelich, if you'd like to propose an amendment while Mr. Lake is talking, then....

Mr. Mike Lake: Well, given the testimony from the witness today about the circumstances under which it's given to members of Parliament, versus the type of information that's released publicly, I think it would make sense and be prudent to receive this list in camera to start with. Obviously this is not information that typically is made public by the department. I think that would be the smart thing to do, so I'd fully support that.

Now, are we discussing right now the amendment, or are we discussing the motion itself?

The Chair: Well, we just have the motion. We're discussing the motion until Ms. Yelich—

Mr. Mike Lake: Good, because I want to be clear in terms of what I said previously here.

I'm not accusing any individual of anything, Mr. Savage. I'm simply saying that under the old program there was the potential for corruption. I think we should be doing everything we can to avoid the potential for corruption; therefore, I think this program obviously had to be changed.

The Chair: Hold on a second. I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lake and his colleagues have been suggesting for weeks that there have been shady dealings.

[*English*]

The Chair: This is not a point of order. I'll put you on the list, Mr. Lessard, if you'd like to discuss this. So I'll put you on the list to speak.

I recognize Monsieur Roy, and then Mr. Savage.

Go ahead, Mr. Lake, and then I have Ms. Yelich's amendment drafted, and we'll get to all the speakers.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: The point is that it was absolutely imperative. I think it was agreed by most of the people on this committee in the past that there were problems with this program that needed to be fixed. As a member of Parliament, it is important to me there not even be a perception of the possibility of any undue influence by members of Parliament in terms of picking winners and losers in any program.

You can make whatever political arguments you want to make. It was funny hearing the claims of petty politics coming from the other side immediately after they rattled off a list of I don't know how many press releases in a row regarding this program. The inconsistency just astounds me.

Mr. Savage, in speaking today, talked about understanding from both sides this idea of whether MPs should or shouldn't decide what to do with the winners and losers. Yet in the past, on March 22, he stated that "I don't see any reason that any part of it should have been changed", when talking about the summer career placement program. So at that point he was sticking up for MPs deciding. Then on May 17 in this committee, he said, "frankly, I don't think they should", when he was talking about members of Parliament having control. So he's clearly all over the map on this. It obviously is a very political issue for that side.

I think what we're talking about here are some very practical changes that members of all parties have said have to happen. It is important for me to get this on the record when I hear some of the screaming from the other side on this.

I'm not accusing any individual of anything. I want a program that makes sense, that's objective, with fair criteria for everybody, so that everybody knows, when they look at those criteria and when it comes to putting forward their proposals, what needs to be in those proposals and the argument they need to make, so that it's fair for everybody. So I think that's where I'm going.

Quite honestly, it's too bad the officials are gone, because I didn't have enough time to commend them. Clearly, they were responsive and did recognize there were challenges and that there were some wrinkles in terms of the program when it began to be implemented. I appreciate the responsiveness of the department and their very, very quick reaction to some of the challenges.

So I just want to get that on the record.

● (1010)

The Chair: Thank you.

I have the amendment to the motion right here before us.

On the list I have Ms. Dhalla, Madame Bonsant, Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, Madame Savoie, and Mr. Savage. Those are the people I have on the list, so we'll make sure we get around to all of you.

The amendment I have here reads:

That the Department of Human Resources and Social Development be ordered to provide to the clerk, for review in camera, no later than June 12, 2007....

This is the amendment for review by members of Parliament, and "in camera" is the only addition.

I would ask those people on the list if we could now talk about this amendment. I will revert back to the list when we get back to the main motion. Are there any other comments or questions about this amendment?

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I have to ask before this amendment goes forward whether it is even possible. This is a new program, and therefore I don't know if it can be delivered riding by riding. I think it's probably not really possible.

As our deputy minister said, they're very busy trying to get this program rolled out. They have a lot of negotiating yet that is in process, plus this fall it's going under review. I think it's pretty unfair to ask them to stop the clock and review an old program that perhaps, as Mr. Manning might have been suggesting in that interview, was unfortunately set up to have so much political influence riding by riding.

I don't think he's complaining about the new program. I think he's complaining about the way it had been set up, which caused all members of Parliament to have these kinds of issues coming back to them. I just wanted to say, though, that I don't think it's possible. I think first of all that's a question we'd have to ask the deputy minister—whether they could even deliver on a riding-by-riding basis. June 7 isn't very far away.

The Chair: June 12, I believe, is next Tuesday.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Or the 12th. What they're asking for has to be reconsidered.

The Chair: The officials will have to get back to us with their response.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Do we want the money delivered to their constituents or not?

The Chair: Are there any other comments on the amendment?

Madame Savoie.

Ms. Denise Savoie: On the amendment, I have two comments. One of them would be that we're talking about public money, so I'm not sure why this needs to be in camera. The other is again that it seems to be handcuffing the ability of MPs to respond to their constituents' questions. If I am limited to keeping this information secret from my constituents who ask me, I think that's handcuffing my ability to be accountable to them. I would have trouble with that particular amendment.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Mr. Lessard on the amendment, and then Mr. Lake and Mr. Savage on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, we will oppose the amendment for the reasons raised by our NDP colleague, Ms. Savoie, including the program's transparency. An entire camouflage operation is underway to prevent people from learning that the Conservatives are fiddling with this program. They have centralized the program in order to politicize it.

One thing must be clarified. It is not true that it was MPs who chose who was entitled to jobs; it was public servants first of all. When there was a lack of resources to meet needs, a kind of arbitration was conducted among two or three organizations.

I'll give you an example. I intervened once. An MP from another party gave five positions to a municipality. We checked with the municipality to see whether it needed them, because it was able to pay for those positions. It had been like that for two or three years. But the municipality refused, saying that it had one because there was one that it could not create. That made it possible to give three or four more, but it was public servants who did the work.

We occasionally intervene politically to assist officials. Everything had been done in a transparent manner for many years in the region, with competent officials and criteria, contrary to what is being suggested today. People are talking as though they were no criteria, as though things were done in a slap-dash manner and people were incompetent. That's false, Mr. Chair. The officials in the regions were discouraged to see the situation this year, because they said to themselves that ultimately it was they who would have to clean up the mess.

To what extent is the emphasis placed on the new criteria? Do you know that, ultimately, the new criteria no longer even stood? Certain organizations were called and told that, if they had less than 32%, they weren't qualified. A number of organizations, in the last operation, had 20%, 21%, 22%. It was automatic. They were told that they had had funding the year before. They are going to hurry up, it's every man for himself, because it hurts politically, because the outcry is too great.

Three thousand organizations in Quebec wrote to the minister. My colleague has tabled copies of 3,000 letters to the minister since the Christmas holidays. There is serious discontent. It's not a question of MPs, because there are members from all parties. There are quite a few federalists and quite a few people who don't like the Bloc either, just as there are others who don't like the Conservatives. And yet they like to have students to help in humanitarian missions.

I think it's unfortunate that the Conservatives are taking these kinds of measures to prevent people from learning what is going on. We're going to vote against this.

● (1015)

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Mr. Lake, followed by Mr. Savage, speaking on the amendment.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Chair, it's very interesting to hear the conspiracy theories.

I think the department was very clear that this is not information that has been released in the past or in the present. It's not information they release. As a committee, we're asking them to publicly release information they've never released before. There's no hiding anything. We're asking them to do something different from what they've done before.

What we're simply saying is that before we go and release this thing publicly, perhaps we should review the list in camera. This isn't a matter of transparency and knowing where the money is going. We're talking about people who didn't receive funding. We're talking about people who applied for a program and didn't get it. They don't necessarily expect that to be public. We're going to command that the department release that information, which they've never released before.

I think it would be very prudent, it makes total sense, that if we're going to go down this road, we do it in camera.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

I have Mr. Savage and Ms. Dhalla on the amendment.

Mr. Michael Savage: I'd just like to comment.

Mr. Lake refers so much to politics. The politics in this program was far less before than it is now. They talk about privacy. On Tuesday of this week, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and the Conservative government went into a Bloc riding to announce one of these programs.

Are you taking the politics out? The politics is going in. This is about politics going in. It's not about politics coming out. That's one of the problems with this.

In terms of in camera, we don't have to meet on this at all. The clerk just needs to get the information and send it to us as committee members. That's fine. That's all we need to know. What are we going to do? Are we going to review every single grant in a meeting before we decide what to do about it? It doesn't make any sense. That would take longer than the employability study, which started in 1998.

• (1020)

The Chair: Okay, I have one more on the list. If you all choose not to speak, I will be happy to call the vote.

Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Just in terms of the amendment, I think we all have the right, as members of Parliament. We are there to provide services to our constituents, to be able to answer their questions. We have a right to see this list.

I believe Mr. Lake mentioned that no such list has been done in the past. That is completely incorrect. We as MPs, regardless of how long we've been elected for, all know that we saw a list last year for this program. Regardless of political party, every single MP in this country received a list last year. Last year this list that we received as MPs outlined recommendations by HRSDC as to the number of every non-profit, public, or private organization that applied for funding, and what the recommendation was by the department. I know there are many MPs who did not pick winners or losers. We simply went with the recommendations made by the department.

So I think this information was provided to us as parliamentarians in the past. We do not need to have an in-camera meeting for this to be provided again. I think this is public knowledge. I know the list provided in the past did not come with any other documentation stating that there should be a confidentiality agreement imposed upon it. I think there are not any privacy concerns in this particular case. I think we need to have the list in order to do our job as MPs.

The Chair: Thank you.

If there is no further discussion, I will call the vote on the amendment, for review of the members of Parliament in camera.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We will now move back to the main motion. I still have on the list Ms. Dhalla, Madame Bonsant, Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, Mr. Savage, and Madame Savoie.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I don't need any more discussion.

The Chair: As I talk to you, you can remove yourself from the list then.

Ms. Dhalla, okay, thank you.

Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Mr. Lake said he wanted to accuse no one of fraud, corruption or whatever, but that seemed like an accusation. We worked with competent officials from Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Perhaps Mr. Lake has never seen the list or worked with the organizations, but I have done the rounds. It isn't corruption, but rather assistance to organizations that need it, such as organizations of persons with disabilities.

He asked a question concerning people who benefited from the former Summer Career Placement Program that had not received funding, which is entirely normal, in view of the increasing number of applications and declining funding year over year. Last year, there wasn't a lot of funding, and there will probably be even less this year because the Conservatives have cut the budget by \$11 million and are preparing to cut \$45 million next year. Their budget will be worth even less.

We are now in the service of a right-wing government, and, to be entitled to have students, organizations are required to change their criteria in order to please the government. It should be the contrary. The government should establish criteria with a view to helping organizations. It is not up to the organizations to change their criteria in order to have a little money that will enable them to get help during the summer.

I will vote in favour of the motion. I find it unacceptable that the organizations are compelled to change in order to comply with certain ideas.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bonsant.

We're going to move to Ms. Yelich, Mr. Lessard, Madame Savoie, Mr. Savage, and Mr. Lake.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: On Mr. Savage's point about the agriculture announcement in a Bloc riding, of course we'd want to make sure that the Quebeckers in that riding know that this is a Canadian program, that it's from the Government of Canada, not from the separatist party. I just think they'd probably have to let people in that riding know this.

However, I don't think it's possible to have riding by riding. It's a new program. I think that has been overlooked again. It's a new program. It was the deputy minister who all of the opposition parties commended for the competence of the department. They're doing very well at what they're doing; they know what they are doing. Therefore why do they question the deputy minister when she said that privacy is an issue? I don't know why we are challenging the deputy minister on that. So I don't think it's possible to get it riding by riding, because it's a new program.

How many applications are they going through—60,000, 80,000? I don't remember right now.

They're working very hard. As you can see, we already took one hour out of their time, and they have precious little time. There are a lot of objectives and criteria that they have to review and get this money flowing. I think it only speaks to how the opposition are more concerned about their political points than about getting this program to the people who need it—the new program for all of Canada.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

We'll now move to Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, I don't know whether there has been follow-up concerning the motions that we agreed to in the week of May 15. I had introduced two motions that were then adopted by this committee. They were of the same nature as those on which we are preparing to vote. However, my motions did not concern organizations that had not obtained funding, but rather those that did. For the organizations that received funding, that doesn't appear to pose a problem. I would like to know why this list hasn't been updated. Were you informed of that, Mr. Chairman, Madam Clerk?

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I believe Mr. Lessard's information is coming.

The Chair: I can't speak on behalf of the department, Mr. Lessard, but I know some of that information was part of Mr. Savage's motion as well. So if Ms. Yelich says it's coming, they are probably compiling it right now.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: No. Mr. Savage is talking about organizations that did not obtain funding. Mr. Chairman, the two motions that we adopted refer to organizations that received funding in 2006 and 2007. That information was not provided to us either. The date appearing on the document—

[English]

The Chair: His motion did include those who received funding and those who did not, so there was an overlap of those two motions.

Go ahead, Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Look, Mr. Chairman. I don't know whether the same thing appears in the record, but here it states: [...] a list of organizations that were granted funding along with those that were denied funding, under the Summer Career Placement Program in 2006 and the Canada Summer Jobs program for 2007. It was the same for 2006. In my two motions, I referred solely to organizations that had obtained funding. That doesn't appear to pose a problem for them. I believe it was Ms. Charette who told us that this morning.

Why haven't we received them to date? If I'm not mistaken, the date given was June 1, 2007.

[English]

The Chair: Yes, and I believe the response from the department indicated the individuals who did and a list of the reasons why they felt they could not. We have a new motion here by Mr. Savage to deal with that issue.

As I said, I can't speak on behalf of the department. Ms. Yelich seems to think they are compiling that information, but we have a new motion before us that will cover off that information. I believe that's what Mr. Savage was trying to do with that.

I recognize you had a motion before that, requesting similar information, and I now realize that Mr. Savage has a new motion covering those same things again.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Since you are our Chairman, it is important that we be on the same wavelength. Do you acknowledge that Mr. Savage's motion, which he had to introduce today, includes the same requests as those contained in my two motions of May 15? It's exactly the same thing. At least that is what I understand.

Do you also acknowledge that the minister has no objection to providing this information, but that he is not providing it? However, he does object to providing it, on the grounds of confidentiality, in the case of organizations that did not obtain funding. Do we agree on this matter? It's important for me because I want to know how to handle the motion before us.

• (1030)

[English]

The Chair: I understand, and now we'll wait to hear what the department has to say.

Thank you, Mr. Lessard. That is correct.

We will now move to Madame Savoie.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

In response to the comments that were made by the Conservatives, I'm going to clarify certain points. This is very important.

Obviously, on the second round, the criteria absolutely no longer stood. It was said that funding was granted in response to calls by members. On the pretext of removing the program from the politicians, these people simply mixed politics into it. If the intention was really to remove politics from this issue, why is it that, for the opening of the student placement office two or three weeks ago, a directive was issued directly from the minister's office, according to Service Canada, asking that the MP be "disinvited", but that the provincial representative be invited, whereas this is a federal program? In fact, I think that politics is being mixed into this program. That's clear on all sides. It's become a kerfuffle, chaos. As representatives, we deserve an explanation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Savoie.

I have two people left on the list. I have Mr. Savage and Mr. Lake.

Mr. Michael Savage: I feel compelled to respond as well along the lines of Ms. Savoie to the comments that Ms. Yelich made about how of course we'd want to have government members making announcements in Bloc ridings, that you wouldn't want separatists making those announcements. That is profoundly undemocratic. It is not up to the government to decide who the people in any riding should elect. The people decide that. To suggest that the government would go in and make an announcement before the MP even knows about it—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I'll just clarify it.

The Chair: I'll put you on the list if you want to respond.

Mr. Michael Savage: Surely the member of Parliament in any area who receives enough votes to get elected is democratically elected and shouldn't be ignored by the Government of Canada. I find that appalling. We always got this information before, those who were allocated funding and those who weren't.

I want to make one comment to Mr. Lake. My position has been unquestionably consistent through this entire piece in everything I've put out and everything I've said: The old system worked; don't change it—there's no need to change it. I think there are lots of reasons to allow an MP a say and to allow an MP no say. I don't think the MP should pick winners and losers, but I think the old system worked because Service Canada made those decisions at the local level. They knew what was going on. What we've done here is centralized it until it all went off the rails and then they went back to the Liberal formula. They went back to everybody who got grants under the Liberal days and said now you're okay for this year.

There's a fundamental inconsistency. This problem has become an absolute case on how to mismanage a program for political purposes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Savage.

The last person I have on the list before I call the vote will be Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I notice that Mr. Savage is very selective in what he wants to choose to say that he said and very selective in what he chose to hear today. Obviously there were some transition issues that were addressed and clearly the witnesses referred to those transition issues. We hardly went back to the old Liberal plan.

I want to talk about the motion here right now. I want to be very clear, because with the comments that Ms. Dhalla was making—and I'm not sure if she was listening when the witnesses were addressing her questions—it's very clear they were differentiating between what gets released publicly for everyone's consumption and the information that you get in your office regarding your own specific riding, and who was and wasn't selected at that time. That information was never released publicly unless you decided to send out a press release and do that. What I heard the witnesses say today, and I thought it was very clear, is this is not information that has been released in the past publicly. Who got funding and who didn't riding by riding across the entire country is not information that has been released publicly, and it is not information that they feel is appropriate to be released publicly.

What would happen if it's brought to this committee is it becomes public as soon as it's tabled in the committee if we're not in camera. I just think before we vote on this we just need to know what it is we're voting on. Let's make sure we're very clear. We're voting on the release of information that hasn't in the past under the old Liberal program or ours been released before. It's plain and simple. Let's at least just know what we're voting on before we vote. Let's be clear on that.

Just in reviewing the motion here I'm going to propose an amendment to it in bullets one and two. In bullet one, what I would like it to say is "under the summer career placement program in 2004, 2005, and 2006". Then in bullet two I would like it to say the same thing, "summer career placement program for 2004, 2005, and 2006".

I think we need to get some perspective if we're going to be discussing this fairly. We need to have some context and we need to know what's happened in the past as well. I think it's a common-sense amendment. If we're going to vote for the motion anyway, I don't think there would be any concerns with adding those other years.

• (1035)

The Chair: I'm now taking names for the amendment. I have Mr. Savage and Madame Bonsant on it.

Mr. Michael Savage: I don't have a real problem with the amendment, but talk about inconsistency. Ms. Yelich says we can't make this so complicated; these guys are so busy. We don't have the information, and it's hard to get it, for 2006. Now we want to go back to 2004? I think all that's going to do is delay.

I don't have any problem saying we want this information on this amendment by June 12, and the rest of the information as soon as they can make it available. But anything that delays this information.... I support Ms. Yelich on this one thing: let's not make it too cumbersome for the department. This is the important information that we need.

The Chair: Madame Bonsant.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I'm going to vote against the amendment because I kept the lists in 2004-2005. I did the rounds of my organizations. When we refer to the public list, it's the list that goes to the members' offices. I never took the list, but I had it published in *La Tribune*. There's a difference between public and public.

What I want—and I don't know whether that's also the case of the others—is to get the list at my office. You talk about the announcement naming the organizations that have obtained funding, but the parliamentary secretaries went around Quebec and announced which organizations had obtained funding and which ones had not. It isn't necessary to obtain a list. That too is a bit public.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Madame Savoie; then I have Ms. Yelich for the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Denise Savoie: I don't understand the purpose of the amendment very well because I believe we already have that list. I saw it in my riding. I don't see how it could be helpful to request it again.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now I have Ms. Yelich on the amendment; then we'll call the vote. Oh, I'm sorry, then I have Mr. Lake. Thank you.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: For consistency, we want to see what the department makes public, so we need all of the lists they usually make public. Perhaps what the members received before was not the same sort of list that is made public. I think to have consistency in what we're looking at and in comparing the data...

This is the whole problem: we're always comparing it with an old program. If we're really going to compare it with an old program, we need all of the information. To just study a new list and start going through a new list doesn't make any sense, when it's a brand new program. I think we have to have some sort of consistency.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

I have Mr. Lake, and then, if there are no further comments, we'll vote on the amendment.

Mr. Lessard, do you want to speak on the amendment? Okay.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I think the comments by both Ms. Bonsant and Ms. Savoie speak to the problem with the communication here. Both of them refer to the fact that they already have this information for their own riding.

The trouble is, no one else has the information for your own riding. What we're releasing here is everybody's information across the country. So you may have the information for your own riding—we all do, for the years we've been MPs—but what we're releasing here is information across the country, for everybody's riding.

I want to see the information for your riding. If I'm going to see the information from 2006 and 2007, I want to see the information from 2004 and 2005 as well. That's what I'm asking about.

You weren't maybe listening to what they said, Mr. Savage, because both of them were concerned about the fact that they already have the information for their own riding.

If we're going to release all of this information, clearly I want to see it for 2004 and 2005. I'm not going to hide the fact that we had a

change in government—actually, I'm rather proud of the fact that we had a change in government—in January 2006. I think it would be fair to take a reasonable snapshot here, to have a picture of the two years previous to the change in government, if we're going to have the information anyway, and the two years after. It's just a logical, commonsense way to approach this information, if we're going to do this.

I can't see anybody actually opposing that amendment, to be honest. If you're going to ask for the information, you have to ask for all of the information, at least the amount of information that gives a clean snapshot of the history here, and I think four years is a reasonable snapshot, if we're going to go down this road anyway.

• (1040)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

I now have Mr. Lessard and Mr. Savage, on the amendment.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I understand Mr. Lake's concern. These people probably want to be able to work on the basis of the new political criteria for next year, as the deputy minister said earlier. That can wait, Mr. Chairman.

What is currently on the agenda is the situation this year. To get a better grasp of that situation, we must compare it to that of last year. To do that, the load has to be as light as possible for officials. So, for the moment, we must limit ourselves to 2006 and 2007. Once Mr. Lake and his colleagues have those lists in hand, they can consult those from previous years if they deem that appropriate. Then they can re-address the question.

It is hard to understand the Conservative logic. First these people say it is impossible to provide these lists, but they suddenly say they are prepared to have not only those for 2006-2007 to be provided, but also those from previous years. That's quite hard to understand.

I think that's quite ironic from a political standpoint. Our colleague Ms. Yelich, whom I appreciate very much, cites the example of Quebec. We shouldn't make any announcements. Mr. Chairman, I've never made any announcements, nor has my colleague. In Quebec, two-thirds of members are from the Bloc Québécois. That may be explained by the fact that our conduct is dignified. The Conservatives, on the other hand, completely disappeared from the map in Quebec because their conduct was undignified. They currently represent 7% of the deputation. If they continue to act in this manner, they will disappear from the map once again.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have Mr. Savage and Ms. Yelich.

Mr. Michael Savage: Just to clarify for Mr. Lake, we don't want this information so that we can call a press conference and list all the organizations that did or didn't get funding. We want this list so that we can find out how badly this program was screwed up and the impact it's had in the ridings, which is felt, and which the government wants to keep under wraps.

We've never gone out with this list before. We use it in our duties as members of Parliament. The government members are listening to their political masters here. Mr. Chong told me the other day that one of the problems with the old program was that everybody got the same amount. All the ridings got the same amount of money.

There is a riding in Newfoundland that got \$1.2 million in funding. My riding got \$400,000. There's a riding in Ontario that got \$98,000. It was based on criteria. The criterion was the youth unemployment rate in that region, which makes eminent sense.

We need the list so that we can do our jobs as MPs and represent the people we are supposed to represent.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Savage.

Next is Ms. Yelich, for final comments.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Actually, I will defer to Mr. Lake.

The Chair: All right; Mr. Lake is going to have the final comment.

Mr. Mike Lake: I hope what I'm hearing over there is support for my amendment. I'm sure they wouldn't want to be withholding information or hiding information from 2004 and 2005, so I'm hoping that this amendment will pass and we'll be able to get the full information.

The Chair: If there is no more debate, I will then call the vote on the amendment.

• (1045)

Mr. Mike Lake: I request a recorded vote.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 3)

The Chair: Okay, the amendment is defeated. Let's go back to the main motion.

I have one speaker left on that list. It's Mr. Lessard. I don't know if you had covered your comments, but I do have you on the list.

Are there others?

Okay, I have Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: It's astounding to me that we voted down that amendment.

If we're going to put the information on the table, I want to go back to common sense here. Obviously...based on the input that we got today from the department, I do not believe that we should be releasing the information in public, based on the information we have.

An hon. member: It's done.

An hon member: We've already voted.

Mr. Mike Lake: No. We're debating the motion now; I can debate the motion.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: I thought you were debating the amendment that we just discussed with regard to 2004-2005.

Mr. Mike Lake: Now I'm debating the motion.

The Chair: Hold on one second.

Mr. Lessard, sorry—what was your point?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

We have disposed of this motion. It was negatived. The debate is over. We agree on the principle, but it's the date that poses a problem. We could come back to this later. We can obtain this information, but later, so as not to burden the department. We will ensure we have the requested information for the twelfth. We do not object to the principle. He is entirely right on that point. We need only state another date.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay, go ahead, Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Back to what I was saying, I think that when you look at the motion as it stands right now, it's obvious that the entire issue has been a very political issue on the Liberal side. It's very important, if we're going to pass this motion, that we have a complete picture. Obviously there are politics being played in terms of the vote on that amendment. It's a common-sense amendment. It's not political, because it just creates a fair picture.

If we're going to release the information.... I think I'm very clear that as is, I won't be supporting this motion as it stands. But even if I'm not going to support the motion, it's clear that it's going to pass. I think if we're going to pass a motion like this, it's important that the information be presented in context. To have proper context, you have to have two years. You have to have at least four years.

I'm prepared to move another amendment. And I'll continue to do this until it gets some common sense. We can either vote on it and then go on to what we need to go on to and vote for a common-sense amendment, or we can continue to avoid having proper information out there.

The amendment I'm going to move now, under the first bullet, is that it read, "under the summer career placement program in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006", and then, "distributed by the summer career placement program for 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006".

Quite honestly, this isn't a matter of trying to waste time. We can move on and we can vote on these things until we get something that's common sense, and then we can move on to whatever it is we have to discuss. But if you guys are going to play political games on the other side and vote down an amendment that makes total sense simply because you don't want that information to come out, then I'll keep moving amendments, and we'll add years if we want to. It has to have context if you're going to put the information out. It has to have context, plain and simple.

The Chair: On this amendment list I have Ms. Dhalla, Madame Savoie, and Mr. Savage.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: On the amendment, if Mr. Lake and the Conservatives are so eager to have the information from previous years, they have access to that already. We've seen that the parliamentary secretaries and their ministers have utilized that information in repeated venues across the country, whether they're making announcements in Quebec or in the House of Commons in the chamber. So they have access to that information.

I think if they were interested in having that information previously, they could have put a motion forward. We know that for people on this side, in terms of the opposition, it is really not about politics. This is about non-profit organizations that have been denied funding. It's about students coming into my office when I'm there on a constituency day on Fridays saying that they had access to jobs last year and they don't have the same access and they want to know what is going on. And we're unable to respond.

I find it ironic, because if the deputy minister, under the direction of the minister, I gather, whom she directly works for, sends us a letter saying that there are privacy concerns, and at the same time she sends us a list of expenditures per riding, they must have a complete list of organizations that received funding if they can come up with that final amount. So if Dartmouth—Cole Harbour received \$400,000, there must have been a list of organizations that received funding that added up to the \$400,000. If someone out in Bourassa in Quebec received \$232,000, there must have been a list of programs that received funding to come up with that final amount of \$232,000. So when the Conservatives are saying that it's difficult to come up with it on a riding-by-riding basis, we've already been provided the information in terms of total amounts. What we are asking for is a comprehensive list.

I think the prudent thing to do to ensure that it is transparent and to see that there is accountability is to put forward this list. I'm sure there is nothing to hide. It is public knowledge when the list does come out. We as parliamentarians are asking to be able to do our job. We are a link between our constituents and the government, and we have a job to do. I think these types of handcuffs are really putting a restraint on our ability to do our jobs well.

• (1050)

The Chair: I have heard a couple of different things here. I do want some clarification, Mr. Savage, on the motion. As I understand it, you were you requesting the same information you received last year. You asked for riding-by-riding information. In other words, you're requesting the same list you got last year in your riding. Is that correct, essentially? Or are we looking for all these lists, having other people's lists going back and forth? Are you just looking to have your list in your riding provided to the individual members of Parliament?

Mr. Michael Savage: I'm entirely comfortable with that. The intent of this is so that I know what is happening in my riding, and it's important that we know, across the country, the total funding amounts. That's another piece of it, for the committee.

Mr. Mike Lake: That's entirely different from what she said.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: If a member of Parliament is provided with a riding-by-riding list, as we were last year... The list we were provided last year had every single organization that applied. Then HRDC made recommendations on whether or not these organizations should get funding or get partial funding or be denied funding. We want that list either given to us or given to every single MP across the country.

The Chair: I just want clarification. You were looking for the list the way you got it last year?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: It's a new program.

Mr. Michael Savage: Yes, but they have computers now, Lynne. They can work around.

The Chair: We're going to move on. Here are the names of those I have on the list now. I have Madame Savoie, Mr. Brown, Mr. Savage, and Ms. Yelich.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

I share the concern about being able to compare apples with apples that Mr. Lake is raising, but I think there are two concerns, one of which they have expressed themselves: they don't want to bog down the department. Why not accept this motion as it is and make an additional motion to get these facts down the road, because we're not asking for anything different from what was obtained.

There's no rush on that information. It is going to be good to have, and I would support it if it came in a separate motion with a different timeline. There isn't the same rush for 2003 as there is to respond to the groups that have been calling our offices.

It would be useful to have, and I would support getting it with a longer timeline, if they're willing to make that kind of amendment and change the timeline. This is the urgent part of it. Let's not bog down the department, as you suggested on your side, and get at this information. Then we can come back and get at the other information for previous years, if you feel the need to respect a principle of comparing apples with apples.

It's not a question of not accepting the principle Mr. Lake raises. It's just a question of different levels of urgency that we want to get at to respond to our constituents in our ridings, to the groups that have approached us, to the students who have talked to us.

• (1055)

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Brown, followed by Mr. Savage, and then Ms. Yelich.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Allison.

I'm a bit perplexed too that Mr. Lake's amendment was shot down. This committee works best when we compromise. We've seen a few examples of that over the last month. We were able to move through things swiftly because there was that willingness.

What we have seen in the last 30 minutes is a move away from that, which is a bit disappointing. I'm glad to hear Ms. Savoie say she wants to see that context and look at the whole picture.

I'd understand why the Liberal members here would vote against seeing past years, because I wouldn't be surprised if there are things they want to hide there. But to see the Bloc and NDP vote with them and stand as a crutch for the Liberals to hide the performance of this program while they were in government is odd. I don't know why they would choose to do that.

I hope, if Mr. Lake rewords his amendment and adds the discretion to it that Ms. Savoie was searching for, that they'd want to see that broader context. It is a bit unheard of to go foot by foot, hand in hand with the Liberals, trying to avoid further information for the decision-making process as we review this.

That would be my advice. If we want to move through this swiftly, there needs to be that greater cooperation, and a way to do it is what Ms. Savoie suggested. You can play with the timelines, but get the whole context; get the whole picture. Let's not try to hide Liberal dirty secrets. And they certainly don't need a crutch, doing it with the Bloc helping them.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Next we have Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: In the interest of breaking this filibuster—Mr. Lake has indicated he wants to talk this out—I think Ms. Savoie said it very well: there are no secrets here. How often did you even see this in the headlines in the last ten years? You didn't, because it worked under the covers in our communities, it worked for non-profit organizations, it worked for students.

We can go back to 1994 if you want. What I don't want to do is make this encumbrance upon the department so heavy that they can't release the critical information. For me, the most critical information is this year, because I know last year and years before. If Mr. Lake wants to do another amendment to go back to 2004-05—pardon me, if he wants to make another motion—I'll support that motion, but this one is very, very important. We have to get this and we have to get it by June 12. So I'll support Mr. Lake if he wants to make his motion, following this one.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Just to clarify, the amendment we're debating right now is with regard to 2003, 2004, and 2005 being added to the motion.

We're going to let Mr. Allison take back the chair.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Because it has now been decided we want to study the list, then I think in order to do a comparative—because what we're studying is how the program works, and I think Mr. Savage made it quite clear he doesn't believe this new program works—we have to have the old lists.

Mr. Michael Savage: The department made it clear.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: The department didn't. The department is busy, but they're rolling out this program and they're going to review this program. So this is the list I think would be very difficult and would take time to provide to the committee.

The old lists probably do not, as you said earlier. With the technology nowadays, that's probably not going to be the issue. The issue is, if we're going to take our time at committee to study a list, then I would like to see some comparative data. I myself have my own list, and the department said each of us can get our own list. To have the department provide lists for across Canada for us to examine, then I think we have to have some comparative data so we have something to work with.

We're talking about a new program. We want to find the flaws in it. This is the best way to do it. This could even help the minister in his review.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I had to step away for a second, so I might have missed Mr. Savage's comments.

With regard to what Ms. Savoie said, here's my concern. When you asked why we couldn't do it as a separate motion or do it down

the road later, first of all, as Ms. Yelich said, the information's already there. So this is not the part that's going to take the lion's share of the time.

The reason why not is that this is clearly a case of the Liberals wanting to release a specific set of information that they will then cherry-pick for political ammunition—clearly. I don't think anyone would have a question. Even they know they're going to do that.

So what I'm saying is, it has to come together. The information has to come together at the same time in the interest of fairness, of context. So I think it's common sense. I think it makes sense to do it the original way I said, two and two, so 2004 and 2005, 2006 and 2007. I think that probably makes the most sense. I want to be clear: this is an issue of principle. We can pass this in one minute and then we can go on to whatever else we're doing. But I will not let this die. This is not going to pass as is; it won't.

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lake.

I have Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, is it possible to introduce a subamendment?

[*English*]

The Chair: Sure, most definitely.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Since we want to give priority to Mr. Savage's request, I would move, as a subamendment, that the information for 2003, 2004 and 2005 be sent to us no later than September 1. If the department can provide it sooner, that will be a good thing, but whatever the case may be, Mr. Savage's motion will have priority.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Can you turn off the BlackBerries? It's hard on the ears.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'd just ask people once again to put their BlackBerries on silent.

We have a subamendment. We'll discuss that right now.

I have a new list, starting with Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: This will take two seconds.

Mr. Lessard probably didn't hear what I said to Ms. Savoie, but I'm saying the same thing: it has to come at the same time. It has to come at the same time for context. The whole purpose for the list is for the Liberal members to cherry-pick for political purposes. That's the whole purpose for that list. If the information doesn't come at the same time, it's just not acceptable. It has to come at the same time.

The Chair: Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: I have a question on the subamendment. In this amendment it indicates that if we don't get this information by the specific date, we could have it reported to the House, correct? If the subamendment were adopted for September 1, would that mean that we could not report this to the House until September 1?

That's a question for the clerk.

The Chair: The subamendment left June 12 intact. The subamendment was just for the 2003 to 2005 years.

Mr. Michael Savage: So if we didn't have the first part of the information by June 12, we could report to the House that we hadn't received that information, as per Marleau and Montpetit, page 864.

The Chair: That is correct.

Madame Savoie, and then Mr. Brown.

Ms. Denise Savoie: You know, Mr. Lake repeats that it's to allow the Liberals to cherry-pick. I don't know what their motives are, but my motives are to be in a position to respond to my constituents this year. I'm not responsible for three years ago. I'm responsible for now. That's what I need an answer for: now.

I do think the analysis would be interesting and will be interesting. That's why I would support this amendment in terms of a different date. But I think there's such a thing as asking for so much information.... I think anybody who's been involved in bureaucracy knows that you can shut down a system by asking for so much information. That's the concern.

Perhaps it might be more reasonable to say that if the other information for 2003, 2004, or 2005 is available now, then bring it in as well. That I would support—if the other information, etc. So just to be clear to Mr. Lake, that we're not and he is not trying to bog down the system, if that information is available, let's have it.

Is there any way of making a sub-subamendment? I don't know where we're at.

It's a question of getting the information, responding, and being accountable—I think that's the favourite word of the Conservatives—to our constituents this year. That's what I would propose—unless this is all about games-playing. If we really are trying to solve the problem, then we can add this....

•(1105)

The Chair: Madame Savoie, is that it for right now?

If this motion is defeated, we can certainly add a subamendment back to that.

Ms. Denise Savoie: It was just that this subamendment would perhaps address Mr. Lake's concerns that he wants the information at one time. I'm saying let's get it all at one time if that information is available, if this 2003, 2004, or 2005 information is available. If not, then the later date might be more reasonable for that.

What we're concerned about is responding to our constituents now.

The Chair: Okay.

I have other people on the list, but yes, if the committee is in agreement with that, we could change that. I would have to get some consensus.

Right now I'm going to continue on with the list.

I have Mr. Lessard on the list, after Mr. Brown. I have Mr. Lake after Mr. Lessard, and Ms. Dhalla and Ms. Yelich.

Go ahead, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you.

Ms. Yelich made a good point, which I'm not sure was fully observed by everyone. In her previous comments she said the information that's going to take the longest to acquire and put together is from this year. They already have the information for previous years. It was sent out to individual MPs. So if we're worried about a date and getting previous years—delaying information that Mr. Savage so dearly wants—that's not a problem. The information is already there. This will not delay it. This will only provide context.

So if you're against context, don't worry about Mr. Lake's motion; oppose it. But your amendment doesn't specify that it's at the same time, and that's what we want. We want it at the same time so there's context. We can move through this very quickly. It's ready now and this will not delay it. So I don't know why we're saying September 1, or something like that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Lessard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, unfortunately I must withdraw my subamendment, for the following reasons.

First, I moved it at the invitation of Mr. Brown, who reminded us that we have worked on matters on which we have all managed to agree. I have tried to reconcile the Conservatives' concerns with our own. However, in view of Mr. Lake's last remarks, I realize that those concerns are not what I had perceived. They are instead strategic concerns for the purpose of preventing the Liberals from using the motion for political ends, whereas that was not our aim. Our intention is to understand what happened, so that we can give answers to our voters during the summer. They are waiting, and they do not understand what happened.

In view of the answer you gave Mr. Savage, that the September 1 date took precedence over the entire motion and delayed the whole thing, we are no further ahead. So I withdraw my subamendment, and I would like us to vote on the motion now as it stands. If Mr. Lake's concern and that of his party is shared, as Ms. Savoie wisely suggested, we could come back to it later. At this point, I think we should agree to the motion as introduced by Mr. Savage.

•(1110)

[*English*]

The Chair: Do we have unanimous consent from the committee to withdraw Mr. Lessard's subamendment?

Mr. Mike Lake: No, because we're willing to support your subamendment.

The Chair: Okay, so we'll continue on the list.

You happen to be next on the list, Mr. Lake, so fire away.

Mr. Mike Lake: We will support Mr. Lessard's subamendment and then go to my amendment. Hopefully we'll support that. Then we can go to the actual motion and be done.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: He's putting a timeline on it, though. How is your amendment different?

Mr. Mike Lake: My amendment throws the 2003, 2004, and 2005 information in there. He amended it to make the 2003, 2004, and 2005 information reportable by September.

The Chair: I sense there may be some willingness to work together on this. Do you want to take a few seconds to discuss it? Procedurally we have to withdraw it and move forward, but if there's some kind of consensus we can put a new amendment forward, if it's okay.

Monsieur Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Chairman, can we agree for this amendment to be separate, so that we can work now with the results from June 12 and give our voters the relevant information?

[English]

The Chair: I believe that's the way the motion reads now.

I will suspend for a few minutes. Then we'll come back to deal with this again.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1125)

The Chair: I'd like to resume this meeting, and I'm hopeful that we can get going. I know we've been here for about two and a half hours.

Right now we are looking at the subamendment. Mr. Lake had added 2003, 2004, and 2005, and then Mr. Lessard had mentioned that the information not be reported back any later than September 2007.

On the list here, I still have Mr. Lake, Ms. Dhalla, and Ms. Yelich.

Mr. Lake, would you like to fire away?

Mr. Mike Lake: Can you actually read the subamended motion, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure. We made a suggestion here because you had added "under the summer career placement program in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006". We just added a separate bullet that said "and that the information regarding 2003, 2004, and 2005 be provided to the committee no later than September 2007".

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay. We're okay with that.

The Chair: You're okay with that?

Mr. Mike Lake: Yes.

The Chair: Wow. We should have suspended earlier then. We could have saved some time.

All right then. I still have people on the list.

Ms. Dhalla, are we okay?

Ms. Yelich, are we okay?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I think we can't leave without realizing what we're asking for. We asked the deputy minister to come here today, and she did, in her letter of explanation, talk about Canada student jobs in the current year. First of all, the human resources committee

is asking for that information for 2007 to be provided riding by riding.

The letter from the deputy minister and her evidence today said—if everybody was listening, and if the opposition were listening, they would realize—that the 2007 information isn't collected riding by riding. It is produced regionally for not-for-profits, and nationally—and I clearly remember her saying nationally—for private and public sectors.

So the committee keeps asking for information in a form that can't be given. So the motion is great, I guess, but it's not going to be able to be delivered, in my view.

There's another thing that I want to reiterate. They continually say we don't want to put the department out for the previous years, as Mr. Lake's motion has read. However, what I'm trying to emphasize—and the deputy minister said this—is that there are negotiations right now to complete the summer career program. The second round of funding is being negotiated now. They're in negotiations. Let them complete the program before we start asking for evidence of what this program has delivered, and if we're doing it because we want to convince the public that this new program is no good, then we have to bring it into context and have the other information at the same time, although Mr. Lake has conceded, I guess, to allow it to be postponed.

But again, would they please remember what the deputy minister had said? I really don't know what you're going to do with the list. We're going to bring it in, and then what are we going to do with it? Mr. Lake has indicated, and I never like to be political at these meetings. I really do wonder what we will do with the list, because what about the successful people? Will that pit successful applicants against unsuccessful ones? Are you going to call them all in and say, "Look, we just gave this group—as you see, I have this list here—funding"? What are you going to do with it?

If we're going to examine a list and study a list, and in the context of the program—and the opposition cannot seem to accept that this program is not about the old program, it's about going on and moving on—we have to provide lists to compare and to see that it's not a good program. Mr. Savage continually says the "good old program". Well, it couldn't have been that good or we wouldn't have changed it. I think it's time to move on.

Merci .

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Yelich.

I have Mr. Savage, and if there are no additional comments after that, we'll have a vote on the subamendment, then the amendment, and then the main motion.

- (1130)

Mr. Michael Savage: I'm fine, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're fine?

We're going to call the vote on the subamendment. Once again, the subamendment was that the information be reported back no later than September 2007. So if we're all clear on the subamendment, then I will just call the vote.

Mr. Michael Savage: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

I hate to do this after we've had a long day, but I just want to be very clear that the subamendment bringing in September doesn't change the fact that if we don't get the information asked for by June 12, that can still be reported to the House. We don't have to wait until September for the completion.

The Chair: That is correct. The subamendment was in a separate bullet form that suggested that the 2002, 2003, 2004 be provided no later than September, and quite clearly, that the other information has been asked for by June 12.

(Subamendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Now we're going to move back to the amendment, with a subamendment. Was that 2003, 2004, 2005? Once again, that would be reported as well. Once again we have added "no later than September 2007".

(Amendment agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: I will now move to the motion as amended. So the information will be reported back no later than June 12, and any of this additional information no later than September 2007.

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: So that is done.

I am going to suggest, in the interests of time—we have been here two and a half hours—that we adjourn the meeting for today and we look at Bill C-284 on Tuesday. Employability will always be there as a backup, so if it takes us an hour to move through Bill C-284, great. If it takes us two hours, that won't jeopardize individuals who are coming as a result.

Is that okay with the committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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