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

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**Chair**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki**



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

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• (1555)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Thank you, gentlemen, for allowing us to intervene to get some other business done.

There may be bells ringing. We'll have a half-hour bell, but I would ask for unanimous consent to go 15 minutes into the bells before we suspend until after the vote.

That should give an opportunity for you to make your presentation.

If we have time for some questions, we'll do that. If not, we'll resume when the voting is completed. All right? Do I have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. No one is opposing....

Which of the two of you is going to present first? Louis?

Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development):** Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and distinguished members of this committee.

My name is Louis Beauséjour and I am the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of the Skills and Employment Branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

[English]

**The Chair:** You might want to slow up a bit for the benefit of the translators, sir. Okay? Go ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I am joined today by Yves Gingras from the Strategic Policy and Research Branch.

On behalf of the department, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak with you today on our skills development activities in support of high-demand occupations.

HRSDC aims to build a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive

and rewarding lives, and to improve Canadians' quality of life by assisting them with making important transitions.

While we are responsible for the design and delivery of a large suite of national programs that provide direct benefits to Canadians, I will confine my remarks today to our programming that supports skills development and labour market efficiency.

As we are all aware, the Canadian economy is undergoing significant changes. We recognize that the growth and decline of industries, and changes to the way work is conducted—including through the introduction of new technologies—are creating new and growing skill and labour demands. In order for Canada to remain a leader in the global digital economy, for example, we need both highly-skilled ICT workers, as well as digitally-skilled workers in jobs throughout the economy.

At the same time, the Canadian population is ageing, with many Canadians approaching retirement. This means that, despite strong immigration and efforts to support the retention of older workers, such as the elimination of mandatory retirement ages, our labour force is going to grow much more slowly than in the past, creating demand for replacement workers.

• (1600)

[English]

The Government of Canada recognizes that while structural changes and economic growth are increasing employer demand for particular skills—such as science, technology, engineering, and math skills, digital skills, medical skills, and the skilled trades, as you have identified in your study—labour market needs differ across the country. While some sectors and regions face critical skills and labour shortages, others face skills surpluses and high unemployment rates, pointing to the growing issue of skills mismatches.

Recognizing that provinces and territories are well placed to design and deliver labour market programming that responds to their local and regional needs, a significant component of HRSDC's labour market programming involves transfers to the provinces and territories. Each year the Government of Canada transfers almost \$2.5 billion under the labour market development agreements and labour market agreements. Using these transfers, provinces and territories can tailor their programs and services to local economic realities and address skills and labour shortages in their jurisdictions.

In addition to these broad labour market transfers, HRSDC has a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing labour market efficiency, increasing the participation of under-represented groups, and creating a skilled labour force. I will briefly discuss our programming in each of these areas and how it helps to address skills shortages, including in high-demand occupations.

As I have mentioned, while labour market projection may indicate that we may meet demand at a national level, regional or local over-supply or under-supply of high-skilled workers may in fact exist. For this reason, efforts to enhance labour market efficiency are critical to matching the supply and demand of skills across the country. Labour market efficiency means that workers are able to access jobs matching their skills and employers can access the qualified workers they need. HRSDC's programming in this area focuses on labour market information, labour mobility, and foreign credential recognition.

Our Working in Canada website posts job offers enhanced with occupation- and location-specific labour market information for job seekers, workers, and businesses. It includes occupational and career information, such as wage rates and salaries, current employment trends and outlooks, and skills and educational requirements.

The Working in Canada site will be further enhanced through the new sectoral intelligence program. The new program will engage industry stakeholders in the development of labour market information, national occupational standards, and certification requirements across key economic sectors. This information will be disseminated through the WiC and partnership organizations to ensure that Canadian employers, workers, and students can make the most informed choices. It will also help post-secondary institutions' decisions about curriculum development and admission levels to help meet demand in emerging or growing sectors, such as health care, energy, and information and communication technology.

[Translation]

Given Canada's slowing labour force growth, internationally trained individuals play an increasingly important role in supporting economic growth. Recognizing that internationally trained individuals experience difficulty in finding work that matches their skills and education, the Government of Canada, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, is leading the implementation of a key initiative, the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

The Government of Canada invested \$50 million over two years through the economic action plan and further contributes \$25 million annually to improve the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Fundamental to the collective effort to implement the framework, HRSDC's foreign credential recognition program aims to improve the integration of internationally trained individuals into the workforce. Under the framework, governments agreed to initially target 14 priority occupations over three years for actions to speed up foreign credential recognition. These 14 occupations represent 85% of the skilled workers coming to Canada and include a number of high-demand occupations, such as registered nurses, physicians, and engineers. Internationally trained individuals in these priority occupations can now expect to have their credentials assessed within one year.

As you probably know, internationally trained individuals often face financial barriers to credential recognition and can have difficulty borrowing money due to a lack of credit history in Canada. Recognizing this, Minister Finley announced on February 22, 2012, an investment of \$18 million in a three-year foreign credential recognition loans pilot project that will help cover the cost of licensing exams, training and skills upgrading. Delivered in partnership with community organizations, these loans will make it easier for internationally trained individuals to secure jobs that suit their skills and experience.

• (1605)

[English]

While foreign credential recognition helps address long-term labour and skills needs, the temporary foreign workers program responds to short-term labour and skills shortages. By facilitating the entry of temporary foreign workers into Canada, the program helps meet the needs of employers that aren't able to find Canadians or permanent residents to fill the jobs. HRSDC is currently developing a new streamlined application process for temporary foreign workers to be launched in spring 2012. This new process will be limited in scale to higher-skilled occupations, including the skilled trades.

Another component of labour market efficiency is mobility. HRSDC works with stakeholders to reduce barriers faced by internationally trained individuals and Canadians as they move across the country. Recent amendments to the agreement on internal trade represent a major breakthrough in domestic labour mobility. Provincial and territorial governments have agreed that workers certified for a regulated occupation in one province or territory can, upon application, be certified for that occupation anywhere in Canada. This means that internationally trained individuals and Canadians can more easily seek available work in their field wherever they wish to work.

Given declining labour force growth, combined with high demand in a number of sectors and regions, increasing the labour force participation of under-represented groups can help to overcome skills and labour shortages. HRSDC has a number of programs aimed at ensuring that groups that are currently under-represented in the labour market—including aboriginal people, youth, older workers, immigrants, and persons with disabilities—have the skills and opportunities to participate.

I have already mentioned a number of initiatives that support the participation of immigrants, but I will now speak to a few of our programs that are targeted at aboriginal people, and youth in particular. I would be happy to provide additional examples if you are interested.

The aboriginal population in Canada is fast growing and represents a valuable pool of labour in Canada. HRSDC funds a suite of labour-market programming to ensure that the aboriginal population has access to skills development and training in order to take advantage of job opportunities where there are skills and labour shortages. The aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, for example, is a demand-driven program that provides funding to over 80 aboriginal organizations to deliver services that help aboriginal people prepare for sustainable, meaningful employment.

[*Translation*]

The Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF) is a partnership-based, opportunity-driven fund that supports projects aiming to encourage innovation and partnerships, to test new approaches to the delivery of employment services, and to address systemic gaps in service delivery.

SPF has the flexibility to respond to skilled labour shortages and is already funding projects that help address employer demand for digitally-skilled workers.

For example, SPF is providing \$3.5 million over four years to the Aboriginal workforce development initiative in New Brunswick. In partnership with local educational institutions, this initiative is working to support ICT-focused education and training. It is expected that 150 Aboriginal people will become employed in the ICT sector as a result.

Youth also have unique needs and challenges in obtaining employment. The youth employment strategy is the Government of Canada's commitment to help disadvantaged youth, recent graduates and students get the information and gain the skills, work experience and abilities they need to make a successful transition to the workplace.

The career focus program, for example, which is delivered under the youth employment strategy, provides career-related work experience opportunities for recent post-secondary graduates. In support of the digital economy, a portion of this program's funding is being targeted toward helping recent graduates find employment in the ICT sector or in digital occupations across the economy.

Other initiatives outside the youth employment strategy are also supporting youth and employer demand for digital skills. For example, HRSDC provided funding for the digital jobs of tomorrow project, which is carried out by the Canadian Coalition for Tomorrow's ICT Skills. Improving ICT career awareness is key to increasing post-secondary enrolment and graduation rates from ICT disciplines.

In September 2011, the project launched a series of outreach initiatives, including a website and activities for schools and students aimed at changing perceptions about technology-related careers. Over 7,000 students have already participated in these activities.

● (1610)

[*English*]

I will now highlight some of HRSDC's initiatives to create a skilled labour force, including those targeted at medical skills, STEM and digital skills, and the skilled trades.

HRSDC supports access to post-secondary education through the Canada student loans program, which provides Canada student loans, Canada student grants, and repayment assistance measures; as well as the Canada education savings program, which helps families save for the post-secondary education of their children. Budget 2011 announced improved student financial assistance measures for part-time learners so that more individuals can get the skills they need to succeed in today's labour market.

Our labour market projections indicate that shortages of medical professionals are expected over the next decade. To help address growing demands in some regions of the country, Budget 2011 announced that the federal government will forgive a portion of the federal component of Canada student loans for new family physicians, nurse practitioners, and nurses who practise in underserved rural or remote communities.

Access to highly skilled STEM workers, including ICT professionals, is critical to attracting multinational firms to Canada and to ensuring that Canadian firms are able to grow and develop. The Government of Canada supports the acquisition of STEM skills in a variety of ways. Budget 2011 announced that HRSDC would reallocate \$60 million over three years as part of the digital economy strategy to support digital skills and enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy, including STEM fields. Many of the government's initiatives focused on STEM skills are supported by science-related departments, agencies, and the granting councils. My colleagues from Industry Canada may be better placed to provide details on these initiatives.

With a budget of approximately \$35 million in 2011-12, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills is helping Canadians develop the literacy and essential skills they need to participate fully in the labour market. For example, in February the government announced that the Community Business Development Corporation Restigouche will receive more than \$1.6 million for a project to develop workplace digital skills in small rural businesses.

The Government of Canada also recognizes that skilled trades are essential to building and maintaining Canada's place in the knowledge-based economy and are critical to economic recovery and growth. As part of an integrated suite of federal supports to apprentices, the apprenticeship grants introduced by this government in recent years are supporting apprentices and helping to address foreseeable labour shortages. In addition, Budget 2011 announced that the government is supporting Helmets to Hardhats, a program that helps veterans, Canadian armed forces members, and reservists access a range of careers within the construction industry.

We are also working closely with the provinces and territories and the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship to manage and deliver the interprovincial standards Red Seal program. This program increases the mobility of skilled workers across Canada, making it easier to match supply and demand. The government has also begun work with the CCDA to facilitate the assessment of internationally trained skilled tradespeople and others who face barriers to certification.

●(1615)

[Translation]

Let me conclude by thanking you again for the opportunity to contribute to your study. Ensuring that we have the skilled workers to deliver essential services such as health care, and to drive growth and competitiveness is crucial to Canada's continued prosperity.

As I have briefly discussed here today, HRSDC has a number of measures in place to help address the skills and labour demands of employers across the country. Our programming enables flexibility to address regional labour needs, promotes participation and enables skills development, and helps qualified workers obtain employment wherever their skills are in demand.

The contribution of other stakeholders including educational institutions, industry, and governments is also needed to ensure Canada is well positioned for growth and competitiveness.

Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that presentation.

We'll suspend and come back after the vote, I would expect in about 20 minutes or so.

Thank you.

●(1615)

(Pause)

●(1645)

**The Chair:** Just so everyone is aware, Louis Beauséjour needs to leave by 5:15. When we scheduled his appearance initially, he was going to be long gone by then. By rearranging the agenda for our benefit, it's made it awkward for him.

I would suggest that if we can, we'll get a full round through, and then we can get you out by that time. That would be appreciated.

Unless there are other comments or thoughts, we'll just limit it to those.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** I think at some point we may have to ask the department to come back, because setting the framework for the study is fairly important, even with the shortened time we've had.

**The Chair:** I'm sure we could probably get the department to come back, could we not, if we felt that necessary? Are you thinking at the early part of the study?

Okay. An extra 15 minutes won't mean that much one way or the other here today, but it's something to keep in mind. Perhaps we'll have the parliamentary secretary take note of that and arrange for that to happen along the way. Perhaps when we have some witnesses who can't come or something like that, it would be a good time to bring them in for another hour where we can ask questions.

With that, we'll start the rounds with Ms. Crowder.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Thank you, and thanks for coming today.

You covered a lot of territory in your speech, so I'm assuming we only have five minutes, Mr. Chair.

I don't have the exact wording of the study, but essentially what we're looking at is assessing skill shortages and coming up with plans to deal with that in a number of particular areas. A number of research papers have been done on assessing the viability of labour market information. I have two here: one is from the Canadian Council on Learning, entitled "Is it Possible to Accurately Forecast Labour Market Needs?" The other is from the Canadian Policy Research Networks, titled "Connecting Supply and Demand in Canada's Youth Labour Market".

In both cases, they have identified some problems with the way we gather information on the labour market and our ability to forecast longer-range needs. I don't mean we here or the government, but broadly in society. I think we've seen a number of mismatches over the last many years. I wonder if you could comment specifically on the demand side—not on the supply side—and what your department does around gathering demand-side information.

**Mr. Yves Gingras (Acting Director General, Labour Market Policy, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development):** Maybe I'll go first on this one.

A number of activities are done to gather information on the demand side. One key activity, and one of the most structured, is around the Canadian occupational projection system that our department uses. It's been in place for many years, and it's based on a macro view of the economy at the national level.

A scenario is developed on the growth of 33 sectors. It's done with the Conference Board of Canada—

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Sorry, but may I just interrupt? I know we have limited time, and it may be that we want to get a broader overview on COPS. One of these papers identified some problems with COPS. It states:

Descriptions of how the system is used are available, but there are no hard data that makes it possible to assess its use.

Has an analysis been done of the effectiveness of COPS in the last...? I know that COPS changed substantially a number of years ago.

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** It continues to evolve, and now we've just produced a new set of projections. Every time there is a look at how it has performed, it's assessed internally in the department. In terms of helping users, this type of information that is produced is also evolving, and we're looking at making improvements to address these criticisms.

• (1650)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** You're saying that the effectiveness has been assessed.

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** This is work we do internally. When we do the modelling, there is always a look back to see if things could be improved. The modelling is always improved based on these assessments that we do internally in the department.

That's not publicly available.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Can the committee have access to the analysis?

That's an important question for us. If we're going to be looking at skill shortages, we want to know how to predict them. If some of the

models that are being used for the predictions have not been as effective as they could have been, that would be important for us. We only need to look at the digital economy. A number of years ago, when the tech bust happened, we were still bringing in temporary foreign workers, for example.

I would assume that some of that labour market information to say we still needed tech workers came from the department.

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** On COPS, I will have to investigate how structured that is. The research is not structured in a way to be shared, but I will see what can be done.

It's one element of what is being done in the department. There are consultations with industry that will inform the demand side. There's also information that comes from the sector councils that is structured for us. It also informs what happens on the demand side.

All of these together allow us to form an expert view. It's not just COPS, per se. COPS is only one of the elements that will help us understand what is driving demand 10 years out.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Again, has an assessment been made of these various tools that are used around the demand side to determine their effectiveness? A number of the documents I looked at said short term we do fine, longer term we don't do so well.

You've got students who are investing in four, six, ten years of education, only to find when they graduate that what they thought they were gearing up for doesn't exist.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** Yes, you're right.

I think trying to forecast the future will always be a challenge. We have jobs appearing and disappearing. Most of the tools we have to try to make projections are based on the past. We use data from the past to try to forecast the future. Right now that's the best we can do.

We know that jobs will sometimes not exist in the future. We're not sure what the jobs will be five years from now. Jobs are changing all the time, as new technology appears and older technology disappears.

That will always be a challenge. It's clear we will have to develop better tools and try to figure out what other tools we could use to identify the jobs of the future.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** Yves mentioned the sector council programming, where we basically try to bring together partnerships of people from specific sectors to look at challenges and demands for specific skills and jobs. That's something that is also used to determine the potential skills shortages of the future.

We will continue to do that, to work with partnerships to determine the sectoral skill shortages we will face.

**The Chair:** Your time is up, but you raised a point that I would like to clarify.

So that I understand where you're coming from, you're saying that looking forward in terms of what information from sector councils may be helpful, the Canadian occupational projection system.... Your question was on how it makes the predictions and you want to know some of the analysis behind it.

Was that your question?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** It was identified that there's no hard data that makes it possible to assess the use of COPS. The witness indicated that the department does do an internal assessment, and my question was whether the committee can have access to—

**The Chair:** The actual assessment process. The answer was not really, because it's not based on any kind of a scientific study.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** No. It's internal. That's why we couldn't have it.

**The Chair:** Internal. Okay.

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** I'd like to clarify. It's not something that's formal.

The researchers take it upon themselves to look at the various components to look for improvements. We do not have a formal assessment that we produce internally.

There are, of course, some reflections that are done every time there is a scenario put out about how we can improve it going forward. Unfortunately, it's not structured in a way that we could deliver it to you in a very comprehensive manner. It's not something we sum up in a formal evaluation.

**The Chair:** That brings us to another point. If you're going to rely on some type of information and you don't have any particular basis for it, how much can you rely on it? How does it interact with the reality on the ground years from now, or for people looking today at what they may want to do in years to come?

If that analysis isn't solid enough, how can you predict what you should be doing? I think that's maybe where you were coming from.

We may need a better basis than, gee, somebody had a look at it and this is what they thought.

Anyway, our next speaker is Mr. Daniel. Go ahead.

•(1655)

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

Along similar lines, do we know how many jobs are actually available right now across Canada?

In addition to that, what is the breakdown? Do we know that we need tons of welders, or what skills...?

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** There is a new survey from Statistics Canada. We now have figures based on September of last year, September 2011, that give us a measurement of the intent to hire for available positions by employers. We also have in the department the capacity

to look at online job postings, which is another source. It gives us a different measure. Sometimes the jobs are posted, but they don't really exist. They're employers who will be looking to fill positions or to recruit proactively. In case they find someone of good quality, they would consider that person.

So there are various measures that are quite imperfect. The results don't jibe. They give us different levels. We know there are many jobs that go unfilled currently. Some are really hard to fill. That points to real shortages in some sectors, occupations, regions.

But in terms of level, it depends on the source. We have a couple of sources that would allow us to provide a proxy for the number of job openings currently in the Canadian economy.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Okay.

I have a follow-on from that.

You obviously are posting jobs on this Working in Canada website. My question is very similar to the question from the honourable colleague here. How do we know if these jobs are real, if they're accurate? Is there any traceability that you are performing in terms of jobs posted, jobs filled, jobs not existing, etc.?

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** We don't do follow-up. The jobs are jobs posted by the employer. Right now we use mostly jobs coming from the job bank, which is linked to the WiC website in Canada. That was the main source of jobs for the job openings, which covers only a subset of all the jobs available in the country because it's only those on the job bank. It does not cover all the job openings that are also posted by private owners, like Workopolis or any of this order of website. Basically, we don't have any information on how many people apply to those jobs, and if those jobs are filled in the future. So we reflect the openings made by the employer.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Is that something you will consider in the future? Again, do we know if the salaries that are being posted are real salaries, or are they just posted as a salary to attract people and then when it comes down to it they don't get that salary? I think that would be valid information. The skills gap is there because something's not right.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I don't know if our intention in the future is to track that information per se. WiC is not only about the job posting, but also additional information that is provided by the local labour market. Basically, the main source of data to determine what are the wage rates that people can expect for different types of jobs mostly comes from the labour force survey. Basically, when Statistics Canada is collecting information on the number of people who work in the labour force, they also ask them what is the wage rate, which is the main source of data that is used for that.

•(1700)

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Do I still have time? Am I done?



**The Chair:** You can be if you want.

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Okay, I'll be done.

**The Chair:** You're done?

I just want to follow up on some of the questions that I think Ms. Crowder raised, because they got me somewhat interested. The numbers show no shortage in the service sector worker industry in some of the analysis we had done for us, except for cleaners, and yet in my area and riding we're getting temporary foreign workers to fill positions. We hear the hue and cry of the service industry, "We haven't got enough people; we can't find them." Yet you show no shortage. What's the explanation? Is it (a) because you have inadequate information, or (b) it doesn't take into account regional differences in the country, or (c) whatever it might be? When I look at those analyses, I have a hard time accepting them, based on what I find on the ground in my own riding, in my own city. If we're going to rely on these numbers, why are they so much out from reality, in terms of where I come from? This goes back to Ms. Crowder's question: how do you arrive at these?

So is it (a), (b), (c), or something unrelated to those?

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** COPS is one approach where we try to develop an aggregate view, where we're looking at the national level and we don't go into the provincial or the local level type of information. It's very limited in that sense.

This is something we provide to partners so they can build on it. It is often used by provinces or local authorities to refine some of their own analysis.

I wouldn't be surprised, if you look at local conditions, to see that what you read from the COPS national results don't jibe at all. This is just national information, which is very limited in that sense.

**The Chair:** Okay. I guess it's not fair for me to interject too greatly in this, but there may be other reasons why there may be shortages in one region, why people may not want to move, and so on. That's not reflected in these figures. In any event, it is curious.

If you want to add more to that as you go along, fine. I don't mean to take too much time away from others.

Mrs. Hughes, you're next, I guess.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Thank you very much.

We've heard a lot about temporary foreign workers. We've heard about foreign credentials. We've heard about assets. I'm glad you have that in there because that's going to be one of my questions.

Just to start with, I'm wondering if you are able to tell me how many temporary foreign workers we have currently and whether or not this has been an increase or a decrease. Are we bringing in more temporary foreign workers or are we bringing in fewer?

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I cannot answer how many we have now. I can give the number of temporary foreign workers that came in per year. In 2007 it was 128,000. In 2008, 175,000, I'm rounding the number. In 2009 it went down to 103,000, and in 2010 it was 113,000.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Can you elaborate as to where they were, approximately? Was a certain area taking more temporary foreign

workers or having a demand for them? Was the main area agriculture? Again, I had a question about how many, but you've talked to me about that already.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I don't have all the statistics in terms of area. I think we could have added some more details, but I know about 28,000 temporary foreign workers come for the agriculture sector. That's one piece of information, but I don't have the other specific numbers.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Do you have a tool that evaluates that?

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I think we have the tools. We could have data for national occupational standards.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Okay. I'm wondering if we can get tables to the committee, the difference in, let's say, the last five years as to what the numbers were, where they were, I hope, and what occupation they were filling. I think that's going to be important to us: is there a bigger demand?

We're looking at a document, "Impact of the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program on the Labour Market in Alberta", and they talk about how:

There is a chronic and permanent labour shortage in Alberta. Trying to address it with a temporary program is a stop gap measure at best.

I'm just trying to get some sense as to....

● (1705)

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I can look back at what kind of detail could be provided.

The challenge depends on how much information you need, because I would like to figure out how we define regions. We can probably provide numbers by provinces and probably by some level of this aggregation when we look at different types of job. We can provide it in different ways, but we can provide you some information for sure.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** On that note, is it just the process itself? Do you go back? Even in my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, I've heard that people have been frustrated with the temporary foreign workers' application process and how long it takes.

Are there some evaluations there as well as to what's going on?

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I think we know what is going on. We have been receiving more and more demand for temporary workers. More and more employers are asking for labour market opinion, because that's a job the department is doing for each employer. The demand for labour market opinion has increased recently, and we're just catching up with it.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** So the requests for renewal are part of it, but if you want a renewal it's six months.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** Basically, the labour market opinion is for two years. If you want to have temporary foreign workers for more than two years, you have to ask for another labour market opinion. It's treated like a new one.

**The Chair:** You have 15 seconds.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** I did mention that one of the—

**The Chair:** You're using up her 15 seconds, but she seems amenable.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** As part of my opening remarks I mentioned that we are now looking at improving the process by accelerating the labour market opinion approval process.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Mayes.

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** One of the issues I have with the challenges we're seeing in the west is the skills shortage and looking at some way that we can start moving people in the labour market—make them more mobile to get to the jobs.

I know we're talking about skills training, but is there a way you can connect people to the jobs? If you're training somebody in Newfoundland, you can connect them to jobs in Fort McMurray or Saskatchewan and address some of the needs in western Canada through the skills training.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** The main tool we want to use more and more is the Working in Canada website. We want to be able to post more job openings there to ensure that all job seekers in the country can get that information and know where there are job openings in Canada. That's one of the things we want to improve on.

Right now the only jobs posted on the Working in Canada website are those that are in the job bank. We should do a better job of trying to have access to job openings posted by some of the private sector providers and make them available.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** One of the challenges we're finding is that our provincial education is not really directing students to the skills that are needed. They're going to university and taking courses that may not be in high demand and probably won't be in high demand.

Do we interfere at all in trying to make sure that information and data get out to the universities and colleges in Canada to make sure they understand and educate students? It's a big waste of money. For a student to take a degree, any education is good, but if we're looking for jobs and trying to fill the needs, that is a big problem in western Canada.

• (1710)

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** It's a real challenge to help youth make choices in their careers. We have to figure out who are the best people to target to ensure that they can influence the kids when they have to make their career choices. That has always been a challenge. We're looking at how we can ensure that parents have access to the information on the Working in Canada website. We try to ensure that the information out there is better, up-to-date, and used by people who influence the youth population.

We have to focus more on having that information available in a way that it can be used and understood by the youth population, which is a bit different from the regular job seekers. The tool was developed initially to provide information for new immigrants and after that the job seekers. We need to develop those tools and make the move to target older people who can influence youth when they make their choices.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** We hear information about connecting aboriginal students with programs that are sponsored by various sectors in industry to fill those jobs. Is there the opportunity to do that with non-aboriginals? Is that being done?

**The Chair:** Make it a short response, if you could.

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** Yes.

I will say that on that front there are a number of good programs under the youth employment strategy that could be used to do that when, in particular, we are thinking about skill links, which try to support youth at risk to try to bring them back either to school or to work. That is one of the key programs available to do that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

We'll conclude with Mr. Harris. Go ahead.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm a visitor here today, but I'm astonished at a couple of things. I know we have people called career counsellors in the high schools, who try to do a good job, despite the fact that they have no real information to be able to tell students where the jobs will be in the future to help them make choices. I know that for a fact. I know it's a provincial jurisdiction, but I would strongly suggest that we might have some cooperation between HRSDC people and the provincial people who would deal with that.

I'm also a little astonished that there seems to be some consideration that the data that identify potential job areas seem to be unreliable—I think that was the word. With the technology we have today, we have companies that have the skill to do what they call either dynamic modelling or situation modelling, using the most sophisticated database technology. They put in all the data and it chews it all up and spits out the most accurate information you could imagine. They can predict pretty much anything.

I'm surprised there isn't a company like this that is working with the government or on contract with the government to provide accurate information, because it's such a vital part of our economy going forward. I'm really surprised, because I know that technology exists. I know there are companies that do this for a wide variety of areas and provide that information to our government: When are we going to run out of fish? How about the caribou? How much corn do we need? They can figure this all out, and they can apply that same technology to identify where the skill shortages are going to be and how this is going to play out with the demographics going down the road.

To your knowledge, is there any consideration being given to try to get that more refined so that we can get accurate information?

• (1715)

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** I can take this one, Mr. Harris.

Not in terms of the modelling, but in terms of data, we now have access to a company that provides us with online job postings three times a week in Canada. It covers the whole country, all sectors, many occupations, and—

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Sorry to interrupt you. Those are job postings that exist now. But we have to go beyond what exists today. We have to be looking 20 years down the road to make sure we have the labour skills and the technical skills to fill those big voids that are coming, as our baby boomers start to retire.

**Mr. Yves Gingras:** Mr. Harris, when we put this with the national projections we do, we provide that to our partners at the provincial and local levels. The idea is that they are building on this. I know there are products that take it to the local level, and we rely on them to take it to the counsellors. It's not something we do ourselves, but what we do here at the national level is a stepping stone for them to take it further. We do assist them technically. We work with provincial officials to interpret what we do at the national level so they can go deeper.

I'm not sure if it's all, but some provinces are taking it down to the local level in terms of where the market is going. They are developing their views, and we are helping them do that.

**Mr. Richard Harris:** I appreciate that, considering our government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars—maybe a few billion dollars a year—on programs to prepare people for jobs and getting the skills. It would be nice to know where they're going with that, if we're spending that kind of money. That's my point.

**The Chair:** Just to follow up on that, I guess what you're saying is that maybe there are individual sectors or provinces that might be drilling down to what their specific areas of interest are. But is there a national body that takes this information and compiles it in some meaningful way so that it can be dealt with across the nation and is more specific? Should somebody be responsible?

That follows up on what you were saying, Ms. Crowder. If we don't have reliable statistics that are accurate, should we not position ourselves in such a way that we would, as Mr. Harris has suggested, produce something that is close to accurate, could be relied upon, and could be used for planning purposes?

Is there any response to that?

**Mr. Louis Beauséjour:** We mentioned that COPS is one of potential tools that would probably do a better job, to supplement that with sectoral information. We can work as partners.

One of my first answers is that to try to predict the future in terms of new jobs will always be a challenge. It's not something that is easy to do. Jobs are created. New jobs appear and old jobs just disappear. Sometimes, even in our own system, we keep the same names. At Statistics Canada, most of the information we have, in terms of looking at jobs, is in the national occupational classification system. This system is updated only every five to 10 years. The titles don't change, but the jobs under the titles change. We know that jobs evolve, and we cannot get at that really.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Do you want to make a closing comment?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** The question I wanted to ask is outside of the witness.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Thank you very much. We've kept you here just a little longer. Thank you for coming and indulging us with the change in our agenda. We appreciate that, and we'll have you back again, I'm sure.

Thank you.

Go ahead with your question.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Maybe this could be to the parliamentary secretary. We weren't able to get the minister here for supplementary estimates (C), which we had raised, because the last supply day on the supplementary estimates (C) is Wednesday.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I want some assurance that we will get the minister for the main estimates and that it is scheduled, because our schedule in the House changes, as we saw with the supplementary estimates (C).

**The Chair:** What you're saying is that this is our history.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Yes.

**The Chair:** The main estimates are still there, and you'd like the minister here for that.

We can take that up and report back in due course.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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