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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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• (1140)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order. We're still working on the study of opportunities for older persons in the workforce. We have with us today Barbara Jaworski, chief executive officer of the Workplace Institute.

Can you hear me all right?

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski (Chief Executive Officer, Workplace Institute):** Yes, I can. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Good.

We also have with us Corinne Pohlmann, vice-president of national affairs, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; and Louis-Martin Parent, senior policy analyst, who will actually present.

We'll start with you, Barbara. If you wish to, go ahead and make your presentation. We'll have both parties present, and then there will be a time for questions and answers.

We are starting late, and so we will quit a bit early. We apologize for the inconvenience, but we do want to hear from you, so we will have some questions. We'll extend over into the second panel for some time.

With that, my apologies, but go ahead, Barbara. You can start.

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski:** Thanks.

The Workplace Institute has been focused on older workers since 2004. We've been putting together the best employers award for Canadians aged 50-plus. We've been working with organizations to help them adapt their workplace practices to look at incorporating the skills, talent, and experience of older workers.

In my presentation today I'm going to talk about some high-level concepts that we discuss with employers and ways to help employers understand that there is a really great business case for continuing to employ their older workers, as well as recruiting them.

The first thing is really about linking them to the business strategy. What is their pressing business issue? So often it's about talent and management issues, such as having the skills for their workplace, and linking it to bringing value to the business. Turnover is often a big issue, and training younger workers who are coming into the

workplace but often don't have the skills and experience they need to get up and running as quickly as organizations would like.

We've really identified to employers that there's this period of time between the ages of 50 and 80 that they really need to be considering instead of looking at the time between 50 and 65 as a time for people to be transitioning out of the workplace. Because of the repeal of mandatory retirement and the great health of many individuals, we're looking at the period of time between the ages of 50 and 80 that we call the "kabooming years". It's a period of time where baby boomers want to continue to make a contribution and have an impact. There are many different ways that organizations, because their needs are different, can do that.

The first is really about engaging older workers. The number one way to do that is through flexibility in the workplace. All employees want flexibility, but it's a very important piece for older workers.

Everybody wants to have a career path until the day they decide they're going to leave the organization. Everybody wants to have training and equal opportunity to apply for positions until the day they leave.

There are adaptations in the workplace, such as when we worked with the construction sector to help them develop an older workforce tool kit that helped them understand that heated cabs and joysticks were a way to extend the working life of people who are doing physical jobs. In health care, we helped nurses work with orderlies or have more equipment so that they're adapting the way they're working and redesigning some of that.

Recognition is also very important for individuals in the workplace, especially for older workers. As well, it's a great strategy for not-for-profits, where there may not be other kinds of financial incentives.

Financial guidance is really important throughout a person's career in the workplace. We know that if they are not getting that kind of education, then in fact people may be staying much longer than they would normally have done. A lot of people are in the position of not retiring not because they don't want to but also because they can't. We don't want to get into those kinds of situations in the workplace.

Total health is also important, meaning the relationships that people have with their managers, their co-workers, their physical health, as well as their mental health—which is another focus for some organizations—and work-life integration. Just as younger workers might want work-life balance because of where they are in their life stage in parenting, older workers certainly are interested in that same thing, but maybe for different reasons. They don't necessarily want to work full time, or they have caregiving issues, or they want to explore different kinds of opportunities.

There's caregiving support in the workplace and cycling retirement, which is a little different from phased retirement, and what more organizations have looked at who have defined benefit plans. It's having the opportunity to be in the workplace but to retire and to come back into the workplace, and having meaning in your work.

• (1145)

Then there are a number of strategies that are important for organizations to consider. The first and most important one is workforce planning. It's really a risk management strategy to help them understand how to mitigate the risks of losing those individuals who are providing a great deal of value to the business goals that an organization may have.

In hand with that is succession planning. We know that only about 20% of organizations actually do succession planning and, of those, most of them are focused on the most senior levels in the organization. But the individuals concerned are not necessarily only ones providing value within the organization. In fact, we know that in many organizations and industries there are some key workers whom it's important to continue to have available, even for the training of younger workers. So we see strategies like engagement, recruiting baby boomers, adapting the organization and helping the generations to work together and learn from each other.

For baby boomers themselves, having a career path and helping them develop a professional passport are important, so that they are actually tapping into their strengths and using them to be able to contribute to the organization and understanding what their transferable skills might be to do other things, helping them to learn how to teach other people. We know that mentoring will be a big part of what older workers are going to be tapped to do, but it's not a natural process and people need to learn how to do those things.

Helping people to understand social media and the new ways we are communicating, including everything from Facebook to Twitter to LinkedIn, and understanding how those mediums are being used, is an essential social and workplace skill.

As for understanding how to create your life after work, that might involve starting your own business, or continuing to make a contribution to your community through volunteering and helping businesses to understand how to make links for people. People are sometimes afraid to leave the workplace, because they don't know what else is out there. Being able to link into the community may be very helpful and rewarding—or perhaps selling your services back into an organization or its competitor.

There are a number of key strategies that organizations can use. We have a process for that, so it's really important to structure opportunities to have a dialogue early on with older workers and to give them alternative work opportunities and transition planning. This will be a whole new way for organizations to innovate in the workplace, in the same way that we needed to innovate when women came into the workplace. Baby boomers, now aged between 50 and 80, are going to change the way workplace practices happen, integrating their initiatives into the diversity plans in the workplace. This is often where organizations already have a diversity plan, and developing an older workforce strategy is one place where they can do that, as well as establishing and supporting a connection to retirees.

We've actually presented to a number of organizations and government bodies about a customized video training and online resource tool kit that we have for employers to help them understand how to do this. It's really customizable for employers, and we're thinking that it will be really useful in targeted initiatives for older workers, organizations like Third Quarter, and other programs. We're not re-inventing the wheel. We know there's an issue about hiring and keeping older workers, and there are some very specific types of practices that would be really helpful to organizations in that regard.

That's my presentation.

Thank you.

• (1150)

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

We'll now move to Monsieur Parent. Go ahead.

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent (Senior Policy Analyst, Canadian Federation of Independent Business):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello. My name is Louis-Martin Parent, and I am a senior policy analyst at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB.

With me here today is Corinne Pohlmann, CFIB's vice-president of national affairs, who will be answering questions with me in the small amount of time we have.

We're pleased to be here with you to present our members' experiences in hiring and retaining older workers, as well as policy recommendations on how to best encourage this relationship. You should each have a copy of our presentation as a PowerPoint deck with you in English *ou en français*, and I will be going through that presentation today with you.

First I'd like to spend a few moments talking about CFIB and the way we operate. CFIB is a not-for-profit political advocacy group that represents the views of more than 109,000 business owners across the country, in every industrial sector and region. We are 100% funded by our membership and are strictly non-partisan. Our policy positions are taken based on member feedback from surveys on all issues relevant to them.

Before starting on slide 3, I'd like to note that for the sake of clarity we'll be using 60 years of age as the cutoff for "older worker". Obviously people have different definitions of "older worker", but we're going to use this for our presentation.

Our members have a keen interest in the issue of older workers, not just because of general social issues but also because of the skills and labour shortage problem. This is not just a western Canadian problem; many SMEs in Ontario and Quebec and in Atlantic Canada have reported important skills and labour shortages in their sector or region. National data from 2012 shows that more than 60% of members said that it was somewhat or very difficult to hire new employees in the past three years.

There is no single cause to the shortage-of-labour issue, and there is no single solution to the challenge, either. CFIB believes that an important part of the solution is to improve the participation rate of those traditionally under-represented in the labour force, such as older workers.

To further underline the need to better integrate older workers, I'd like to cite Stats Canada's result from the most recent census:

The number of seniors is approaching the number of children. Between 1992 and 2012, the number of seniors increased 57.6%, while the number of children fell 3.6%. As a result, on July 1, 2012, children outnumbered seniors by 476,300, compared with close to 2.6 million on the same date in 1992.

Finally, for your information, we are currently consolidating our shortage of labour survey data for a mini-report slated to be released later this summer.

The next few slides, starting with slide 4, present data from a 2007 report on older workers in our western provinces. In all, 47% of members in western Canada said that they currently employed workers 60 years or older. Moreover, the tendency to hire older workers increased with the size of firm. For example, 65% of companies with 20 to 49 employees had older workers on staff, compared with 47% of firms with 5 to 19 employees.

More than 50% of firms in manufacturing, transportation and communications, and wholesale reported having older workers. The industry with the lowest incidence of hiring older workers was the primary sector, at 39%.

Slide 5 shows that small businesses value many different traits brought by older workers to their company. In particular, the industry experience or technical knowledge accumulated over many years is a valued skill that 89% of the members say is important to consider when hiring older workers. Strong work ethic and loyalty often also come up as other positive traits, with 85% and 78% of members respectively pointing to these two aspects as beneficial.

Our study asked members what challenges they face in hiring older workers, and slide 6 shows a selection of responses. Overall, the difficulties in accessing and drawing from this pool could be loosely grouped into the following areas: challenges in finding the workers; challenges in updating the required skill levels, especially in computerized environments; and health concerns, such as increased insurance premiums, the ability to do the work required, and job safety.

It's very important to note that many members responded by saying that they had no challenges in hiring and retaining older workers.

Finally, many employers have modified the nature of the job in order to take advantage of an older worker's specific skill set, as

demonstrated by the last quotation on slide 6, and also by the comments Barbara made earlier today.

Slide 7 indicates that hiring older workers depends on many factors, some of which can be controlled by the employer, some by the employee, and some by government.

● (1155)

Our 2007 study asked members how they retained existing older workers. Over 60% of businesses said they had a specific arrangement with their workers on the hours of work, and 45% said they changed the job to suit the needs of the worker. However, over one-quarter of members said no changes were necessary. Still, employers have shown flexibility both in terms of scheduling and in terms of the work being performed.

We should also note that when analyzing the results, it was those businesses that reported having difficulty retaining older workers that were more willing to adapt to the older worker, showing perhaps that the shortage of labour problem is driving this need to adapt.

The next few slides, starting at slide 8, will look at ways to incent workers to stay in the workforce longer. These modifications are important, given our changing demographics, and labour shortages in particular.

The decision in Budget 2012 to increase the age of eligibility for old age security to 67 from 65 was supported by CFIB members, again likely due to the shortage of labour problem. You will note that the majority of respondents were supportive of the measure, with the caveat that workers in the public sector receive a similar increase.

Slide 9 shows that 66% of SME owners believe the OAS changes will result in more people staying in the workforce and will help reduce potential labour shortages.

The government recently also made changes to the Canada pension plan in terms of eligibility and contributions. You'll see on slide 10, on the positive side, that providing the option of delaying CPP in favour of higher future benefits should help address labour shortages. On the other hand, our members have raised concerns about the changes to CPP contributions. It is good that we are encouraging workers to stay in the workplace; however, we should not make this punitive for employers. The changes now make it so that if a worker is over 65 and chooses to keep contributing to CPP, the employer has no choice but to contribute as well. We have had many businesses that were caught by this recent change and were faced with \$5,000 tax bills per older worker. This is a disincentive to hiring older workers.

Like CPP, employment insurance is a payroll tax and is therefore particularly harmful to a business's operations, as it is a tax on jobs. That is why SMEs support the EI hiring credit, in particular, because it is administratively simple and is credited directly to the payroll account. But the point of EI is to be an insurance program in the case of job loss. For some workers this might not be as much of a concern as it would be for the rest of the workforce. They may be working in a position as a favour to an ex-employer, for example, or as a temporary measure to fund a certain personal project or endeavour. In these kinds of situations, could we not make paying into EI voluntary?

To reinforce that point, in the 2008 survey 71% of members said workers over 65 should be exempt from paying EI premiums, versus 23% who disagreed.

Finally, I'd like to sum up by saying that SMEs value the contributions of older workers. Though some flexibility in working arrangements can be required, the net benefit seems universally positive. When looking to encourage the integration of older workers into the workplace, the government could help by providing more information on where to find qualified workers and by creating broadly accessible tools that promote hiring in this manner, like the EI hiring credit.

To that point, EI contributions could be voluntary for both the employer and the employee over a certain age threshold, given that their use of the program would likely be lower. We also suggest that when an employee over 65 chooses to keep paying into CPP to draw higher benefits, which is their right, employer contributions should not be mandatory.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for that and for indicating your membership's responses. We do get responses from them as well on a regular basis and an understanding of what they are thinking.

We'll start now with Monsieur Boulerice.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for their highly valuable input.

I want to begin with the representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

I will start with a little context. A few years ago, even before I was elected as an MP, I visited a textile factory in the Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie riding, as the NDP candidate. Knowing that the factory would soon be closing, people who had worked there for 20 or 25 years told me they had no idea what they were going to do. They hadn't received any skills training during their careers. All they knew how to do was make suits. Their only prospect was probably to depend on social assistance until they turned 65.

All that to say how important I think it is to introduce ongoing skills training programs. Ms. Jaworski talked about that. Your survey on specialized training, however, revealed that only 9% of your

members had taken measures to retain older employees. That isn't very much.

Do you think businesses should do more as far as ongoing employee training goes? If not, should we start, as of now, allocating more public resources to the targeted initiative for older workers?

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent:** A lot of on-site training is provided in the CFIB's member businesses. That aspect of training is very important to our members, because professional training programs lasting one or two years are too costly for them. That is why on-the-job training is often used.

In the case of workers who have held a specific job for 20 or 25 years, it is often necessary to look at what skills they have and, in some cases, to try to adapt the position to their needs, if possible. In such cases, it may be possible to provide on-the-job training.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Right now, do you think the targeted initiative for older workers has enough resources and is truly effective on the ground, making a difference in the everyday lives of tens of thousands of Canadians?

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent:** That's a good question.

[*English*]

Do you want to add anything to that?

**Ms. Corinne Pohlmann (Vice-President, National Affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business):** It's difficult to say because every situation is going to be different, right? As Louis pointed out, many small business owners, for example, do train. It's just not specialized, professional training. It's on-the-job training. It's the type of thing that they are going to train for the positions they have. They are going to continue to keep training those people because that's the only way they are going to retain those people, especially as we move into an environment with more labour shortages.

We certainly could look at specialized training in the public domain, things like the proposed Canada job grant, which we're looking at. We have some concerns, but we like the idea of money going towards workplace-type training so there is money adapted at that workplace environment, because we believe that's the best type of training.

But we're also concerned that sometimes these public types of training are not necessarily accessible to smaller firms. Often it's difficult for them to access these types of training because it's the larger firms that can do the paperwork and meet the necessary criteria to access these types of things.

That would be our concern about the public type of training.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent:** I would like to add something to that. Members of our federation, especially in Quebec, are reporting that some very effective training programs are currently in place at the provincial level. Certain programs in certain provinces are quite effective.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I am going to take a brief moment to ask Ms. Jaworski a question. She brought up an important topic.

It's great that people want to continue working. But for some, it's not a choice: they have to put off retiring. Indeed, the age of eligibility for old age security was pushed to 67 years of age, and 70% of Canadians have no complementary pension fund to draw on.

What do you make of the fact that people are being forced to keep working because they have no other choice if they want to be able to afford rent and groceries?

[English]

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski:** Sorry, I'm not quite sure what the question is.

**The Chair:** Do you want to restate your question, Mr. Boulerice?

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Yes please, Mr. Chair, if possible.

The current situation and the changes made to the eligibility criteria for the old age security program are important considerations. Do you think that, as a result, a lot of Canadian workers will be forced to continue working, even though they would choose not to, if they had the benefit of a private or complementary pension plan or if the public pension plans were increased?

[English]

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski:** Yes, absolutely. I think there would be a big difference.

I will just comment on that as well as the other point you were making. Part of what progressive organizations are doing is talking about the fact that training is a shared responsibility between the individual as well as the organization, and maybe looking at training a little bit differently, not necessarily as an expense for older workers, but perhaps as an opportunity to link it to some of the other business challenges they have, like hiring younger workers where they can't find the talent, with older workers then assisting the younger workers.

Definitely, we're seeing employers right now opening up their eyes to the fact that employees are staying past the age of 65. They are looking around and saying, "Well, I guess we knew that with the repeal of mandatory retirement this was going to happen", but they don't have any practices in place to educate employees starting much earlier—perhaps in their forties—and saving for retirement and what it takes, and now they are caught in a position. I'm talking to employers who are saying to me things like, "It's all fine for you to be saying this kind of thing, but I'm trying to run a five-star hotel, and the bartender who has been with me for 30 years is handing me a drink like this. How do I deal with that?"

So you have a combination of both physical issues and performance issues. There are many different sorts of things that are going on and need to be separated out.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that response.

We'll now move to Mr. Butt. Go ahead.

**Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you both Barbara in Toronto and our friends from the CFIB that are here in Ottawa.

I'll give you a scenario. It's like other scenarios we get as members of Parliament. Let me know how you would provide advice to this individual. I get somebody who comes into my office. He's 52-years-old. The company that he's worked for since he was 25 or whatever is no longer in business for whatever reason. In this particular case, it was downsizing in an insurance company. He's 52. His resumé's are flying all over the place and he's being told things like he's overqualified. He is of the view that there's age discrimination, that the next company is saying that they're only going to get 10 years out of this guy before he retires, so they're not even going to look at him.

How do we get around some of that stereotyping? How do we get the business community, the employers, more engaged in recognizing the value of an older worker? He'll even say that he doesn't mind taking a \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year pay cut to go to a different company that may be somewhat related to what he did before. He says he's willing to learn and train, but he's struggling to get that employment opportunity.

Do either of you have any advice for that constituent of mine? I feel for him. I understand that. He's a talented guy and very articulate, but he's having real difficulty, I think, predominantly because he's at the age of 52 or 53 and wants to keep working. Who wants to start?

Do you want to start, Barbara? Please go ahead.

• (1210)

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski:** Sure, thanks.

I think we often see this, and there are a couple of things I would say. First of all, we've focused a lot of attention on helping older workers repackage themselves and maybe look at their transferable skills. But what we haven't done is to help employers see what the business case is for them. I think that is a really big piece. Employers need to see the numbers. They need to understand that in fact employers who are investing in their older workers and investing in different kinds of strategies are saving hundreds and thousands of dollars.

There are business cases out there, but our focus naturally has been on older workers themselves. Now the big gap is helping employers see that there are different kinds of strategies they can use that are very effective, that will save them a lot of money, and repositioning the fact that older workers are very loyal. They're not going to be leaving you in two to three years' time. The lower turnover costs are going to be very helpful to an employer, saving them a lot of money.

Those are the kinds of cases that we present to employers, as well as packaging up the toolkit and helping employers see that while the toolkit is looking at older workers, it's actually to help your younger workers get their foot in the door.

So it's kind of repositioning, making sure that employers see what the value is for them.

**The Chair:** Ms. Pohlmann, go ahead.

**Ms. Corinne Pohlmann:** I would add that I agree that it's also about educating employers about the value that older workers bring. But you need to remember that employers themselves are getting older. This aging demographic isn't just on the worker's side but also on the employer's side. So I think it's naturally going to become a little bit more easier. However, I still think there's education that needs to be done out there, but it doesn't help your particular constituent today.

I also want to suggest that sometimes there's a big focus by workers, if they've always worked for a big company, to continue to look at the big companies. I often encourage folks to consider the smaller firms, because they are more open, we believe. One in two employers is telling us they're already—this was a few years ago—hiring folks who are over the age of 60. Sometimes I think there's also this bias towards larger firms. Maybe you need to focus on smaller firms.

I think the other piece that's growing among older workers is self-employment. How can we help people transition into self-employment, because it gives them the flexibility they may be looking for? Are there avenues there? Perhaps we're still putting barriers in front of them to their doing that properly.

**The Chair:** You've got about 20 seconds.

Mr. Parent, do you have a comment, and maybe we'll close with that?

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent:** The point about self-employment that Corinne made is very important, especially here in Ottawa. Starting your own business is not something that might come naturally to mind; it's always either government or big business. Having more tools to encourage that kind of entrepreneurship is probably very important.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Cuzner, if you want to conclude, please do.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Yes, I have a couple of points here.

I still have trouble when we refer to older people as 52. I think I'm just a post-adolescent 52-year-old.

You commented that the employers are getting older too. So are they becoming more or less willing to take on older employees? Is it a fact that if some training's involved, somebody in the latter stage of a business is wanting to draw some equity out of that business as opposed to investing in training? What are your thoughts on the employers?

**Ms. Corinne Pohlmann:** We do know that 65% of small-business owners want to exit their business in the next 10 years. So there is a succession issue here. That gives you a sense—

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** That's always a problem.

**Ms. Corinne Pohlmann:** —of the aging demographics. We are not immune to it in the small business sector either.

What I'm saying is anecdotal, but that you tend to want to hire people who reflect you. So if you are a little older, you may get the response, "Well, I'm willing to work another 10 years". In fact, most small business owners tell us they are going to work until they are 70 or 75. That's just the nature of the business they've chosen to be in.

That's why for me it's also about strongly encouraging older workers to think about self-employment and/or working at smaller firms, because I do think there's a little bit more openness to bringing some of those folks on.

• (1215)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** As we are talking about the role of the federal government in this, there are a couple of disconnects. When we look at the increase in youth unemployment over the last seven years, we see that it has gone from 11% up to 14.5%, but we also see that the government cease its support for youth employment centres—which have traditionally provided opportunity for young people during the course of the summer. One of the recommendations from CFIB is about the need for more information on where we can access older workers.

Has Service Canada not been doing a good job? You would think that would be the natural collective for matching workers and letting workers know what skills, training, and opportunities there are. That's what Service Canada is for. Is that a role that the CFIB feels is not being met?

And maybe your group could comment as well, Barbara.

**Mr. Louis-Martin Parent:** Actually, the first part of the EI changes in particular was to push more information to both employers and employees about EI claimants, in particular.

But the more information out there for people who are looking for work the better, not just for youth workers but also for first nations, people with disabilities and that kind of thing, to make sure that we know those people are out there and have skills that can be brought to the workplace.

**The Chair:** Ms. Jaworski, did you wish to make a comment, or not?

**Ms. Barbara Jaworski:** Yes. I think that part of what needs to change, as we discussed, is that we need to see some innovation and different kinds of approaches in the workplace. It's not an either/or proposition, that just because older workers stay, there won't be an opportunity for younger workers. I think that's a dangerous way of looking at growing our economy.

I think workplaces really need to focus on utilizing their older workers in a much different way. I think that mentoring, teaching what they know, and understanding how to transfer knowledge to younger workers is going to become a bigger element in the workplace. In fact, I know that progressive organizations are already quietly making those kinds of investments. I think the future is in helping employers to understand how to begin those changes so that they don't lose out on both younger and older workers.

**The Chair:** I noted that Mr. Cuzner dangerously extended the scope of the study. But we'll move on nonetheless.

**A voice:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Older workers.



**A voice:** Over 15 is an older worker.

**The Chair:** Over 15.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Oh yes, that was just a for-instance.

**The Chair:** Nonetheless, we'd like to thank you very much for indulging us today and answering the questions posed.

We are going to conclude now, and I'll suspend shortly so our next panel can come to the table.

Thank you.

• (1215) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1220)

**The Chair:** We're a little pressed for time so we'll start a little earlier.

Susan Barkman and Tim Jones, can you hear me okay?

**Mr. Tim Jones (President and Chief Executive Officer, Skills Connect, ThirdQuarter):** Yes, we can.

**Ms. Susan Barkman (Vice-President, Marketing and Communications, Skills Connect, ThirdQuarter):** Yes.

**The Chair:** At the table we have June Muir and Patricia Katona from the Unemployment Help Centre. We also have David Whitten, an employment lawyer. We'll have each of you present and then we may have time for some questions. We'll see how that goes.

We'll start with Mr. Whitten. Please go ahead.

**Mr. David Whitten (Employment Lawyer, Whitten and Lublin):** Thank you, Sir.

First of all, I want to thank you for inviting me here today, because in my practice I act for both employers and employees and so I see this issue from both sides of the table. I believe that navigating the transition to an older workforce will become the dominant workplace issue in Canada over at least the next couple of decades. How successful that transition is will have a direct impact on Canada's economic prosperity, as well as our social welfare system.

With that in mind, it's critical that we identify the means and manner in which we can successfully transition to an older workforce and encourage workers to work beyond age 65. In order to do that, this really has to become a national economic priority.

First, I want to point out that the transition from the status quo to a successful older workforce really does face some critical barriers. This is not going to be an easy challenge. One of those, obviously, is the pressure on employers to cut costs by laying off older workers. The other that's been identified already is age-related performance issues—how those are accommodated in a workplace—such as adapting to new technologies, lower energy levels, health and wellness issues, and special needs.

One that I find is often neglected but which I commonly see in my practice is the aspirations of younger workers: "Get out of the way. I want your job." That will require some education and public advocacy to really bridge the gap. We also have an unparalleled mentoring opportunity here for knowledge transfer between older and younger workers that needs to be cultivated.

Younger workers, quite candidly, have to be brought onboard with the concept that people are going to be working past age 65. We have to embrace this in Canadian society so that people's expectation is that they're going to retire later and that our society and our legislation are designed to encourage that.

One thing I want to address before I get into recommendations is some statistics. I think they can often be skewed and misunderstood. One in particular that's highly relevant to this issue is the average age of retirement, which has stayed relatively static since 2004, at age 62. In my submission, there's too much emphasis put on that particular statistic because it's skewed by the age structure of our population. So I'd like to draw your attention to a few other statistics that I've found in my research preparing for today, which I thought were particularly poignant.

A 50-year-old worker in 2008 is expected to stay in the labour force for approximately three and one-half years longer than he or she would have in the mid-1990s. Retirement has been delayed. I'm referring to labour force survey data for my statistics. What this represents to me is that older workers have been consistently delaying their retirement since the 1990s. For example, in 2008, an employed 50-year-old had an expected additional 16 years of work. As I mentioned, that's roughly three and one-half years longer than they would have had in the nineties.

I think the statistic for early retirement has also been somewhat skewed by the marked trend in the late eighties and early nineties toward early retirement, prompted by high public sector deficits. Since the 1990s, though, that trend has changed significantly.

Another interesting fact is the employment rate of individuals aged 55 and over. Between 1997 and 2010 that rate went from 30.5% to 39.4% for men and it's nearly doubled for women. Again, from 1997 to 2010, 15.8% of the 55 and over crowd were in the workforce. Now it's 28.6% for women.

So these data are really at odds with the average retiring age having stayed at 62 consistently since 2004. They suggest to me, in fact, that people are extending their retirement age.

The other aspect that is relevant is the aging population and the fact that our birth rates are down significantly. There's been a long-term decline in children per woman, fluctuating around 1.5 since 2000 compared with 3.9 children per woman in the second half of the 1950s.

So the proportion of older workers has increased significantly and will continue to do so over the next quarter century. The proportion of children, young adults, and middle-aged adults will continue to decline.

• (1225)

How do we address this in a way that's going to make a meaningful impact?

First of all, my recommendation would be—and I believe part of that initiative has begun already in today's room—to establish a task force and conduct public, intergovernmental, and employer consultation with a view to recommending proactive changes in public policy, workplace legislation, and working conditions to make retiring at 65 the exception rather than the norm.

There should be broader consultation to convince corporate Canada, industry, professional associations, and prominent business leaders to take a proactive approach and embrace the idea of an older workforce. This will involve creating economic incentives, including tax breaks as well as grant programs, to encourage this type of thing. I'll get into more detail on that in a moment.

As well, there should be consultation with the human resource community to drive the creation of supports to meet the special needs of older workers and create workplace conditions conducive to the wellbeing of older employees.

Finally, there should be advocacy campaigns involving advertising, earned media, and grassroots advocacy to convince older workers to stay on the job.

What really needs to be done here is to instill an understanding in our population that we have a public duty to embrace the older worker and to create a situation where their knowledge will be utilized to their advantage. That leads me to what I believe to be a critical component to this strategy, and that's taking advantage of this unparalleled mentoring opportunity I mentioned earlier. How do we do this? We create incentives to business to establish formal information-sharing forums, possibly by offering grants or tax incentives for those workplaces that hit pre-established participation targets.

Establish incentives for older workers to become mentors. For example, why not give a tax break to boomers who participate in a workplace mentoring program? This is how we're going to encourage the knowledge transfer. Once that gap has been bridged, I think we'll find a lot of the workplace conflict that arises from the generation gap dissipating and becoming more of a productive interchange between the parties.

At the risk of running over my time, I would say in summary that we have to take a multidisciplinary approach to this. Ultimately, like many things in the capitalist world, we also have to recognize that economic incentives are going to drive a fundamental change in how society approaches these things.

Those are my comments.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you for those comments.

I will move to the Unemployed Help Centre with Patricia Katona and June Muir.

June Muir will present. Go ahead, please.

**Ms. June Muir (Chief Executive Officer, Windsor, Unemployed Help Centre):** Thank you.

Hello. My name is June Muir. I am the CEO of the Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor, Ontario. With me today is Pat Katona, the supervisor of the targeted initiative for older workers program.

I thought I'd give you a little background and history about the Unemployed Help Centre, the UHC. The UHC was established in 1977 to respond to the needs of the unemployed and under-employed in Windsor and Essex County. We offer many programs and services geared to older workers, youth, and newcomers seeking employment. We also offer social services to meet the basic needs of

individuals and families through our "Keep the Heat" program, food bank, community kitchen, and a food rescue program.

We are proud recipients of the Minister's Award of Excellence and the Minister's Award of Excellence in Service Results from MTCU, and champions of the education award from the Greater Essex County District School Board.

The UHC has provided the TIOW, the targeted initiative for older workers program, since July, 2010. I thought I would give you a bit of a program description of this program.

This program provides training at no cost to teach displaced workers aged 55 to 64 who require new or enhanced skills to transition into new employment. The program provides six different certifications and two licences, if required. If you were an older worker and you lost your job, just imagine how difficult it would be to find a job when you faced multiple barriers and didn't have a centre like ours to come to and someone to coach and help you, and if you did not have on-site programs.

Why do we need this program? Windsor has the highest unemployment rate in Ontario, because of the closures surrounding the automotive industry. Of the workers displaced, 24% are aged 55 or greater and lack the skills needed to find alternative and viable employment. Most laid-off workers cannot afford to pay for retraining. Most of them are facing losing their homes and are trying to feed their families. There is no money to retrain.

Short-term training will provide the older workers with the skills and the knowledge to regain access to the current job market, at no cost to them. Our programs are short term to allow them to get out there and work again.

Without this TIOW training program, which is funded, older workers may experience devastating financial hardship, mental and physical health issues, and isolation that will have a domino effect upon their families and the community as a whole.

What are the weaknesses of older workers? They lack the essential skills needed to pursue their chosen career path; lack the finances to register for training programs to obtain skills required for employment; lack knowledge of how to job search; lack experience to complete job interviews successfully. If you have lost your job and you are going to a job interview, you need coaching; you are not able to get through that interview successfully. They also lack self-confidence and have a feeling of hopelessness. Finally, they lack computer skills and education and face technological changes and job restrictions.

What are their needs? When they come to us, they need the UHC to continue and to expand on the target initiative for older workers training programs: to provide the older workers with the essential skills they require in order to be qualified for the job that's in demand. They need training programs that are at no cost to the older worker; training in job search skills; assistance to determine a new career path, training in interview techniques; education on labour demands; education on what essential skills they require to pursue their chosen career path; certifications, if required, for workplace-specific skills.

And they need the TIOW job developer—this is key—to secure job placement and provide them with the coaching needed to retain the job. Our job developers have relationships with our employers. They speak to the employer; the employer knows how important it is to hire a worker. This job developer helps the older workers with their self-confidence while they're on the job.

What skills have we found employers are looking for in an older worker? They want experienced, skilled workers with transferable skills related to the position; adaptable, reliable, flexible, and loyal workers who have updated skills—including certifications, licensing, and technology training—required for the job; workers with the intelligence and the confidence to plan, organize, set priorities, solve problems, and get the job done; with the experience to take leadership roles and achieve company goals; with the maturity and willingness to work as part of a team and to get along with others.

• (1235)

What are the employers seeing when they hire an older worker versus youth? Through the training provided by us from the TIOW program, workers have the certification, licensing, and skills needed to fill the job, transferable skills, reliability, loyalty, flexibility and proven work ethics. They have the life experience and the maturity to problem-solve, excellent customer-service skills, and emotional intelligence. With no child-care issues or maternity-leave concerns, and seeking financial stability rather than job progression, they're much more content.

What would the benefit be for us if additional training dollars came to the program? We could continue and expand our UHC/TIOW training programs and services offered to the older workers to meet current job demands. Currently, we offer three training programs from the nine promising sectors, and additional dollars would allow us to increase these programs, train more older workers who have become displaced or unemployed who need a program to turn to, provide support dollars to equip workers with the tools needed to assist them in their job search, including transportation, work attire, tools, and other areas of need.

I'm very proud to tell you about the success of our TIOW program, the targeted initiative for older workers. Since the program's inception in July 2010, we have assessed 359 candidates, who came to our centre and went through an information session, and whom we helped to decide if they wanted to start the program. We have employment counsellors who do a short intake. They're there to support and guide them, and help them make their career choice. We're happy to say that 320 started the program, with 270 successfully completing the program and 246 older workers securing employment—some 91%—from what we did to help them.

I've worked at the agency for 12 years. Our employment counsellors are very passionate about what they do. Our job developers are very dedicated. We work with these older workers and they need these programs to continue. We have many success stories that we'd love to share with you. If you'd like to visit our centre, you're always welcome.

We'd like to thank you for the opportunity today to explain our program.

**The Chair:** Thank you for sharing that information with us. Certainly, those percentages are very high, so you're to be commended for the work you do.

We'll now move to the presentation by ThirdQuarter, an apt name for sure. We have Tim Jones with us, and Susan Barkman. So go ahead, whichever of you is going to present.

• (1240)

**Mr. Tim Jones:** Good morning. My name is Tim Jones, and I am the president and CEO of Skills Connect Inc., which operates the ThirdQuarter program that serves people who are 45 years of age and over. I'm joined by my colleague Susan Barkman, vice-president of marketing and communications. We'll both make brief remarks, and then we can entertain questions, if you have them.

Skills Connect, which operates ThirdQuarter, is a federal not-for-profit corporation governed by a board of directors, with a head office in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Skills Connect is founded and owned by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

The ThirdQuarter program has been in operation since 2010, thanks to HRSDC and the support of our government. Our mission is to be accountable in meeting the needs of employers and candidates so that we create economic and social benefits for both groups. Our board of directors ensures that we achieve these accountabilities.

ThirdQuarter provides experienced and skilled workers to Canadian businesses through an efficient and streamlined recruitment and skills-matching process. ThirdQuarter is an organization created to address the growing need to recruit a mature workforce of skilled and experienced individuals who are a best fit for employers in both rural and urban communities across Canada.

ThirdQuarter also provides a wealth of resources to job seekers and an easy-to-use process for employers to post positions and be matched with suitable candidates. Skills Connect also operates a blog site and publishes a weekly e-newsletter that's free to subscribers and lists new job opportunities, resources, and how-to articles. ThirdQuarter also employs staff to assist candidates and companies with their employment needs.

Now, in our work, we found that a mature adult may choose to retire and then embark on a new career path; they may stay in the workforce because they enjoy their work and find it satisfying; they may stay in the workforce because they don't have sufficient funds to retire; they could possibly lose their jobs involuntarily and need to find new employment; they may want to combine work and lifestyle options for more balance; and mature women may enter or re-enter the workforce as an adjustment to a major transition, such as child-launching, divorce, or retirement of a spouse.

Canada suffers both from labour shortages as well as serious mismatches between the existing skills of workers and the needs of business. What stood out in recent discussions with business was the escalating and dramatic demographic shift from employees to retirees, leaving a serious gap in most major corporations. This has taken corporations by surprise, with no succession or legacy plans to address the issue. This is timely in so far as the ThirdQuarter movement recognizes these changing demographics and the benefits for our economy and society as a whole.

Today, research has found that Canadian men and women are living longer. That's why ThirdQuarter recognizes and supports their need to work longer. The number of people aged 45 and over who are working to supplement their pension and retirement incomes is rising as well.

Work helps validate mature Canadians' lives. It gives them, as does for most people, a renewed sense of pride, purpose, and peace of mind. Ultimately, work is a proven energizer. It helps many people feel more valued and necessary to their spouses, family and friends, their community, and the world around them. This positive energy spills over into all other areas of life around us.

Canadians aged 45 plus are more vigorous, visible, and vocal than ever. As consumers, volunteers, and learners, they are much more proactive than they were a decade ago. Often, they are the ones who are ready to experiment, to be open-minded in trying new ideas and in learning new things. The fastest-growing segment of social media, Internet, and computer users are people in this very same 45 plus demographic. In other words, our country's vision of aging is definitely not what it used to be. It is changing even as we read this today.

I'd like to identify a few reasons that unemployed older workers are having difficulty finding new jobs.

First, there are high salary expectations. Some employers may be reluctant to hire people who earned a higher salary in a previous position.

Second, there are younger bosses. Hiring managers may believe that older employees would be unhappy working for a younger or less experienced supervisor. Workers who previously held a

management position often have difficulty adapting to a lower level job.

•(1245)

Third, there is the issue of out of date skills. Employers are increasingly requiring job seekers to submit applications and resumés online. Older workers who lack the necessary computer and other technology skills can be at a disadvantage in using these tools to find work.

Fourth, there are expensive health benefits. Some employers are reluctant to hire older people because they expect that it will be costly providing health benefits to older workers.

Finally, there are retirement expectations. Employers will often hesitate to hire or invest in an older worker because they assume that the worker will retire soon and fail to give the employer a good return on their training investment.

Some thoughts that we have on encouraging businesses to continue to employ mature workers include the following. As the workforce ages and the boomer generation of skilled and experienced workers considers retirement, businesses will need to develop strategies both to retain and recruit older workers. Most businesses are telling us that they agree, but they're unsure how to proceed.

One of the most important and effective initiatives will be to better educate management and human resource professionals on the value of older workers. The goal is to see the implementation of targeted recruitment and retention strategies, and changes in workplace culture. Decision-makers need to recognize that the experience and work ethic of older workers are invaluable in contributing to the stability of the workforce and in reflecting the diversity of the customers their businesses serve. Additionally, a supportive workplace culture toward the older worker will help them feel valued and result in long-term loyalty.

Employers must be encouraged to introduce flexible programs, such as job sharing, variable hours, telecommuting, and contracting. This will inspire older workers to stay on the job longer and assist in recruiting workers who bring specific experience and skills to the workplace. In addition, flexible work arrangements will encourage older employees to retain or modify their roles to meet the needs of an organization. Flexible pension programs that don't penalize an employee for continuing to work, and health and wellness supports are also effective retention tools.

In addition to flexible work arrangements, employers should be encouraged to consider workplace accommodation as an effective strategy toward the retention of older workers. As workers age, the physical requirements of a job can impact an employee's health and productivity. By developing initiatives to reduce stress or by retraining older workers to accommodate their needs, employers can ensure retention without impacting productivity.

Often forgotten by employers is the need to keep their entire workforce engaged. As with all workers, employers need to ensure that older workers are involved in decision-making that affects their work and that they have a sense of purpose.

Employers also need to consider that older workers are not entirely motivated by financial rewards and are engaged by being exposed to new opportunities or by acting as mentors, whereby they can share their experience and wisdom.

Now, there are some barriers to employment for older persons in the labour force, and I want to touch on a few of those.

**The Chair:** I wonder if you could maybe conclude with that, if you would.

**Mr. Tim Jones:** Sure, I will.

I categorize these barriers as external and internal, with the external ones being related to employment practices of business, and the internal ones being those that the older workers are in control of themselves.

From an external perspective, employment practices are often based on fallacies and misconceptions with respect to older workers. Frequently, older workers are stereotyped as being slower and less productive and not willing to learn new skills. Additionally, there are perceptions that older workers do not integrate well with younger managers. Older workers can find themselves in interview situations with young HR professionals who are half their age and who have little appreciation for the vast experience and skill sets they offer.

I'll zip through some of this because I know we're running behind.

The majority of the above-mentioned misconceptions are only that. In fact, surveys have shown that older workers tend to be loyal, highly trainable, and often serve as leaders and mentors in the workplace.

To conclude on the point about barriers, some of the most common employment barriers for older workers are internal and reside with the workers themselves. For example, in the case of job loss, the older worker will often lose their sense of identity and self-worth and question their own abilities in returning to the workforce. The task of assessing skills, preparing a resumé, and conducting a job search can be daunting to the older worker. In many cases, individuals will perceive themselves as too old to change careers and will withdraw from the process.

I'll ask my colleague, Sue, to briefly speak about ageism in the workforce.

•(1250)

**The Chair:** We're really running out of time and are over the 10-minute mark. It will be difficult to do that.

**Mr. Tim Jones:** That's fair enough.

**The Chair:** We absolutely need to suspend in about five minutes, because we do have some committee business. I think what we'll do is to give one question to each party and try to make the preamble as condensed as possible.

Ms. Charlton, if you want to pick your question.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Thank you very much.

I'd love to ask questions to all of you, but I'm going to focus on the representatives from the Unemployed Help Centre. Thank you very much for being here. Both Joe Comartin and Brian Masse have told us about the amazing work you do. So you should know that it hasn't gone unnoticed by those of us on this side of the House, in particular.

I want to focus on your comments about advocating for workers between 55 and 64. I understand that you, quite rightly, point out that there are socio-economic reasons, declining pension plans, and all of those reasons why people want to continue in the workplace.

I come from Hamilton where the manufacturing sector has been decimated in a very real way. Many of the jobs that those older workers were performing might allow them to do their job until they are 65, but the physical nature of those jobs may not make it possible for them to continue to do those jobs when they are 70. I know that many occupations in Windsor are of the same nature.

I wonder if you could comment. I know you advocate for people to the age of 64. Do you think that we as a committee need to make that age distinction very clear in our work? How do we treat people beyond 65? Would you suggest that they go through the same kind of retraining programs so that we continue retention? Or do we need to take into account that the physical demands of some jobs just mean that we ought to help some folks retire with dignity?

**The Chair:** Perhaps you could make a short response if you could.

**Ms. June Muir:** Okay, I'm going to answer that as briefly as I can.

They would still require the same training. It doesn't matter that they're 65 to 70, because when they've lost their job or have not worked, they still need to come and sit with an employment counsellor. We have a program called choices that helps them make a career change, because they are going to make a career change, especially if they can't lift any more. They have to know what they want to do and to be passionate about it. So they need to come and meet with the employment counsellor, who then mentors them and works with the employer. Even when they're working, we get training dollars from the government to help us place them in jobs.

So without what you do for us, we wouldn't be able to help them. But because we have the program and the funding, it works really well and we would do the same thing for them.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Daniel, you have one short question.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** I'll be very quick. I'll ask my question of Mr. Whitten since he's a lawyer.

It's come up a number of times already that a number of employers may actually be laying off people in that age group because of the cost of health care. Of course, re-employing them means there are more issues with supporting their health care insurance, etc. Do you have any comments on that and what are you seeing from your practice in terms of employers doing or not doing this?

**Mr. David Whitten:** Yes, I have seen a bit of a trend in that regard, but I think the cost of health care is a bit overblown, because disability insurance policies typically end at age 65. So that falls off the radar right off the bat, which is probably one of the more costly of the group benefits available to workers. That's also a function of provincial workplace safety and insurance legislation, which generally stops paying benefits at age 65, or in some provinces a few years beyond that if the injury happens after age 65.

So that social welfare net falls by the wayside, which does increase costs for employers. So I think the provincial legislation needs to be analyzed in a workers compensation area to recognize that people are working past age 65, so they can pick up some of the slack for older workers and the cost of maintaining benefits for them.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that exchange.

Mr. Cuzner, do you have a particularly pressing question or can we close at this point?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Yes, I'd like—

**The Chair:** I figured you might, but make it a short commentary and a pointed question.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Ms. Muir and Mr. Jones, could you give us your total budget and the breakdown of where the funding comes from? Obviously your groups are both doing excellent work.

**Ms. June Muir:** As you know, funding comes from the federal and the provincial governments working together. If I take a step back to my briefcase, I can give you those funding numbers. But we're funded for the training we provide and for placements. Of course, we're funded for the employees that we hire to do the training.

Without that funding we wouldn't be able to train these older workers. That's important; it's key. They need to be trained. Once they're trained, then we have our job developers who can market them. It's that training that's essential—

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** I think we would benefit if we could get an example from Mr. Jones.

**Ms. June Muir:** I'll hand that in to you.

**The Chair:** If you could give it to the clerk, then we'll distribute it.

**Ms. June Muir:** I will.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, witnesses, for presenting.

We apologize for the abbreviated questions, but we do have to suspend for a moment to deal with committee business. Thank you, again.

I'll ask the members to stay. We need to deal with some committee business.

**Mr. Brad Butt:** Mr. Chair, can I move that we go in camera, please?

**The Chair:** Sure.

Do you want a roll call then?

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

**The Chair:** All right. Let me know when we're in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]









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