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Chair

Mr. Chris Warkentin

Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC)): Committee, I'm going to call the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to order.

Of course, committee members, you'll know that we're continuing our study on land use and sustainable economic development.

Today we have representatives from three different organizations. We have representatives here from the Mining Association of Canada, the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada.

We are going to hear first from Paul, who is with the Mining Association of Canada.

We're going to hear an opening submission from you, and then we'll go to each one of you, respectively, for your opening statements. After that we will then go into rounds of questioning.

The hope is to be completed by 5 o'clock. At 5 o'clock we will be moving into committee business, colleagues, for half an hour. We have some things that need to be solidified for upcoming meetings and for other purposes.

I'll turn it over to you, Paul. Thanks so much for being here. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Paul Hébert (Vice-President, Government Relations, Mining Association of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, committee members.

As the chair mentioned, my name is Paul Hébert. I'm the vice-president, government relations, with the Mining Association of Canada. I bring regards from my president, Pierre Gratton, who was invited to appear but had to be in London at meetings today.

To get things started, I'd like to begin by telling you a little bit about the Mining Association of Canada. We are the national voice of the mining industry in Canada. We represent some 35 members active in the full range of commodities, from iron ore to gold, diamonds, oil sands, steel making, coal, base metals, and uranium. We also have some 50 associate members active in engineering, environment, and finance. Our members are engaged in exploration, mining, smelting, semi-fabrication, and supply in the mining sector.

I have a few words about the industry's domestic contribution. The mining industry is one of the engines of Canada's economy, with some 306,000 employees. Average weekly wages are in the

neighbourhood of \$1,600, which is 30% to 60% above that of other sectors.

The Canadian mining sector includes over 220 producing mines as well as 33 smelters and refineries. In 2010 the sector paid \$8.4 billion in taxes and royalties to governments. To give you some perspective, that's about the equivalent of the taxes paid by one million Canadians.

On average, the sector invests about \$20 billion in capital investment annually, and the trend we've been seeing over the last few years and that we're forecasting in years to come is substantially higher than that.

We are the largest private sector employer of aboriginal Canadians, and I'll have a little bit more to say on that.

We are also a core supplier to the clean technology sector in Canada.

In 2010, we contributed \$36 billion to Canada's GDP.

Talking about capital investment, over the next five years we have tabulated that industry plans to invest some \$140 billion in new projects and in project expansions across the country from coast to coast. So the industry is enjoying very healthy times, driven in large part by demand from China. Prices are quite buoyant. Although access to capital is sometimes challenging, the need for the raw materials is there.

This translates into a huge opportunity for Canadians in general and for aboriginal people in particular. The human resources challenge is one of the key challenges facing the mining industry in Canada to take advantage of this opportunity before us. We know that the mining and exploration sector will need over 110,000 new workers by 2021, so that equates to roughly 50% of the workforce turning over in less than 10 years.

We need all kinds of workers, from physical scientists and geoscientists to miners, tradespeople, people in finance, in health care, and support staff. There is really quite a broad range of opportunities.

Aboriginal people have quite a strong history of mining and tend to be ideally located to take advantage of rewarding careers in mining. Many communities are located in very close proximity to mining projects, and mining companies are doing an increasingly good job of engaging with those communities and reaching agreements with communities to make sure those economic benefits do accrue to the broader group.

Some aboriginal mining statistics: We are the largest private sector employer. Aboriginal workers accounted for about 7.5% of the mining workforce in 2006, the most recent census data we have, and we strongly suspect that number is higher now. That 7.5% translates into roughly double what the aboriginal population constitutes of the total workforce. So it's a success, but it's also an opportunity when you consider how close we are to those communities. We are doing a good job and need to continue doing an even better job of engaging with those aboriginal groups. That 7.5% also marks a doubling in a period of 10 years.

• (1540)

In 1996, only about 3.6% of the workforce came from the aboriginal community. In 2006, it was 7.5%, of which 14% are women. That equates to about 4,500 aboriginal people working in the mining industry in 2006. One challenge that exists in aboriginal engagement is the positions that those aboriginal people hold. Less than one percent of aboriginal people are in supervisory or management positions. They tend to be in entry-level positions. The challenge is to deliver training and establish career paths that will allow people to access the full range and strata of positions in the mining industry.

Concerning impact benefit agreements, in the deck that was sent to you, it says that there are over 170 agreements. In fact, the latest tabulation we've got is that there are 183 impact benefit and other agreements in place between mining companies and aboriginal communities across the country. In the deck you'll see a list of a few notable agreements, from the Raglan Mine-Makivik agreement in 1995, to some of the more recent impact benefit agreements between Copper Mountain and the Upper Similkameen, and Imperial Metals' Huckleberry Mine and the Williams Lake band. These have evolved into quite sophisticated agreements with the communities that include employment agreements, training and development, contracting, environmental land use...really quite broad and sophisticated agreements in their construction and in their administration.

We commend the government for some strong actions that have helped in the mining industry's engagement with the aboriginal community. One program is the aboriginal skills and employment partnership program, or ASEP, which happens to be sunsetting in about three or four days. We do know there are other funds through the strategic partnership initiative and the skills partnership fund that are going to fund those kinds of partnerships. I'll tell you a little bit more in the next slide.

We are also grateful for the support of the sector council program. Ryan Montpellier's organization, the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, has done and continues to do a lot of good work in the area of labour market intelligence and credentialling, which is very important in a time of pretty dire recruiting needs in the sector.

The ASEP program has gone to fund aboriginal mine training organizations across the country, and these are true public-private partnerships. Government funding has leveraged millions of dollars from the private sector, from provincial governments, and from aboriginal communities. From 2008 to 2012, over 3,000 aboriginal people were trained as a result of this program and 1,600 were placed in mining-related jobs through mining training organization

programs. These are programs that deliver pre-employment and employment training, ranging from pre-screening to life skills to job search skills, some very job-specific technical training, mentoring, and on-the-job follow-up and coaching.

Mining ASEP programs really have been the highlight of the ASEP. They have been very successful, from B.C. all the way out to Voisey's Bay, to diamond mines in Ontario, and in the far north as well.

Now I'd like to turn the mike over to Ryan Montpellier. He'll tell you a little bit about the tools and resources they provide to the mining industry in order to diversify their workforces.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier (Executive Director, Mining Industry Human Resources Council): Thank you very much for the invitation, and good afternoon to all.

My name is Ryan Montpellier, and I'm the executive director at the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, also known as MiHR.

MiHR is an independent, non-profit corporation. We are a public-private partnership between the federal government and the mining sector, funded in large part by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada through the sector council program. Our mandate is to identify and address the human resources and labour market challenges facing the minerals and metals sector in Canada.

Part of that strategy, or part of our role, is to identify the labour market trends and provide industry with the labour market intelligence it requires to facilitate decision-making—really to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills at the right time.

As Paul indicated earlier, we are faced with a very significant skills shortage. Over the course of the next decade or so, we forecast a need to recruit about 11,000 people per year. I would note that it is based on a relatively conservative growth scenario. If we continue the trend of the growth that we've seen over the past two years, that number would quickly balloon.

The solution to the skills shortage is not an easy one. The mining industry is doing a lot of work to make better use of all potential sources of supply, to increase productivity, and to increase the use of technology. Obviously, one of the key strategies that the mining sector is pursuing is attracting, recruiting, developing, and retaining aboriginal people in Canada.

To achieve this, there are a number of tools that industry has developed through MiHR and in partnership with a number of aboriginal organizations. I'll speak to a few of those very briefly, but if you do have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them in more detail.

On the first slide you see are really tools for employers. The first one I'll mention is called "Mining for Diversity". It's an employer's guide to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse workforce. Some companies are doing a truly remarkable job at attracting certain under-represented groups, and others are not. The goal of this document, or this tool, was to help identify best practices, document the reasons for those best practices, and share them with other mining companies.

We've seen some tremendous results as a result of this tool. The other resource that I'll mention for employers is a tool called "Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion in Mining". This is a collection of five modules that help train and develop local mine managers to become employers of choice for aboriginal talent. The tool really helps employers move from a culture of exclusion to a culture of inclusion. Making that jump is not an insignificant amount of work, and there are some legacy issues that exist, but we are seeing companies make a commitment to diversity and implement some of those resources.

The other tools I will mention on the following slide are really tools for aboriginal people and for communities as a whole. The first tool is a product called "Mining Industry Human Resources Guide for Aboriginal Communities". The guide walks through all phases of the mining cycle, from mineral exploration to mine closure and mine reclamation, and provides the types of careers, the types of skills required at each phase of the mining cycle, and it provides a number of links to educational institutions, to a variety of essential skills that are required. It really provides general information on where individuals can find employment and how to obtain employment at various phases through the mining sector.

The one program that I think has had the most benefit—or certainly the most impact—is a tool called "Mining Essentials". This tool was developed to increase the involvement and engagement of aboriginal people by providing work readiness and essential skills needed to gain employment in the mining sector.

Now, this was a joint venture between the mining industry and the Assembly of First Nations, but it also included participation from the Métis National Council and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, ITK. What is innovative about this program is that the content is defined by the mining industry based on national occupational standards and essential skills profiles, but how it is delivered is based on traditional aboriginal culture.

• (1545)

It really takes a different, more holistic approach to education based on a traditional learning wheel. Through this program we engage elders, we engage the community, we engage mining companies, and we really try to provide an enriched learning experience for young aboriginal people.

This program is relatively new. It was launched in 2011. We've had a number of sites from coast to coast implement this mining essentials program, including Northwest Community College in northern British Columbia, Northern College in northern Ontario, the Anishinabek Training and Employment Services in Thunder Bay, as well as a handful of other sites currently being launched throughout Quebec.

It is a 12-week program. We've seen a number of successes out of this program, and we do expect hundreds of employees, young aboriginal people, will make their way into the mining sector through this program.

Finally, I'll end with a link. There is a website called www.aboriginalmining.ca. This website has a number of resources and tools for both employers and aboriginal communities to help bridge that gap and to foster this culture of inclusion.

I'll end there. Thank you very much for your time.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate that testimony.

We'll turn to Mr. Bousquet.

You have approximately 10 minutes for your opening statement.

Mr. Philip Bousquet (Senior Program Director, Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and committee members.

My name is Philip Bousquet. I am senior program director with the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. I am here with Scott Cavan, the PDAC's program director for aboriginal affairs.

I also bring greetings from Glenn Nolan, incoming PDAC president, whom many of you know.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before this committee and to offer our comments on land use and sustainable development. Our association, with close to 9,000 members, individual and corporate, exists to protect and promote mineral exploration and to ensure a robust mining industry in Canada. We encourage the highest standards of technical, environmental, safety, and social practices in Canada and internationally.

As members of this committee will know, the PDAC organizes and hosts an annual convention that is the world's premier mineral exploration and development conference. Earlier this month, more than 30,000 people from 120 countries came to the PDAC convention in Toronto to seek projects and investors and to learn about exploration techniques, including environmental stewardship, geophysics, land management, social engagement, and aboriginal affairs.

Over the past seven years, the PDAC convention has offered an aboriginal program that has now grown into two full-day sessions of presentations and discussions, as well as a course on aboriginal awareness and the presentation of our annual Skookum Jim Award to honour and recognize exceptional achievement by an aboriginal individual or by an aboriginal-run business in the mining industry.

The Skookum Jim Award, the awareness training, and the aboriginal program are outcomes of the PDAC's efforts to promote greater participation by aboriginal people in the mineral industry and to foster better understanding between communities and companies. We work closely with the other presenters who are here today, the Mining Association of Canada and the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, as well as many others, including the Assembly of First Nations, with which we have a memorandum of understanding.

The mining industry and the mineral exploration sector in particular are familiar with the matters being studied by this committee, and our ongoing work in this area is directly related to our membership. Land use and sustainable development are fundamental to the practice of mineral exploration. The PDAC's member companies operate in remote areas of Canada. These companies are primarily small and medium-sized enterprises that rely on equity financing to support early stage, higher-risk exploration activities. Many of the operations are small scale, with perhaps half a dozen full-time employees and a greater number of seasonal staff performing a variety of tasks.

Across Canada, mineral exploration and mining is the lifeblood of many small, rural communities. Throughout the economic turmoil of the past few years, these companies have continued to invest in Canadian projects, creating jobs and new businesses that support the industry. Many of these businesses are aboriginal owned and operated, leading to new opportunities throughout the country. Our mining industry is a story of success and a fundamental driver of Canada's economy. As you heard earlier, it is also the largest private sector employer of aboriginal Canadians. From 1996 to 2006, the mining sector saw a 43% increase in the aboriginal workforce, growing to 7.5% of the entire labour force.

Mineral exploration is the essential first step in the mining cycle, and Canada has a number of features that attract investment. We have good geology and good information available through public geoscience, we have a workforce with access to a number of training initiatives, and we have a competitive tax system.

In 2011, exploration expenditures in Canada equalled \$3.9 billion, a significant increase over the \$2.8 billion that was invested here in 2010. In other words, there is great and growing potential. In order to maintain this success, several actions should be taken, the first two of which were part of our pre-budget submission.

As an organization that represents mineral exploration companies, the PDAC has recommended the continuation of the mineral exploration tax credit. The METC and flow-through share financing continue to serve a critical role as they allow junior companies to raise needed capital, keep investment in Canada, and sustain grassroots exploration activity in remote and northern regions where transportation and field camp costs are high.

The PDAC also supports continued investment in public geoscience. The geo-mapping for energy and minerals program and the targeted geoscience initiative have increased the technical knowledge of our natural resources, provided field training for geology students, and encouraged private sector investment.

The first recommendation encourages the raising of capital; the second helps to identify areas within Canada for exploration. In order to proceed with exploration, many other factors need to be considered. A company needs professionally trained people, good community relations, access to land for exploration, and clear, consistent regulations.

The PDAC has worked to develop programs and recommendations that we believe can assist. I'll briefly mention a few of these.

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e3 Plus, a framework for responsible exploration, was launched by PDAC in 2009 to help exploration companies improve their social, environmental, and health and safety performance, and to comprehensively integrate these three aspects into their exploration programs. The program is the first of its kind, a Canadian innovation that is accessible worldwide.

PDAC Mining Matters is a charitable organization dedicated to bringing Canada's geology and mineral resources to students, educators, and the general public. The organization provides current information about rocks, minerals, metals, and mining, and offers exceptional educational resources that meet provincial curriculum expectations. Mining Matters has reached an estimated 450,000 teachers, students, and members of the general public since its inception in 1994. Since 2003, the Mining Matters aboriginal outreach program has delivered workshops to almost 400 teachers in aboriginal communities, who oversee the education of an estimated 5,400 students.

As to land use and public policy, PDAC participated in the northern regulatory improvement initiative and has developed a number of joint submissions with the Mining Association of Canada and the NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines. PDAC supports the implementation of government resource revenue-sharing that would form a basis for aboriginal communities to build towards economic self-sufficiency and encourage greater participation in the mineral industry.

Working with our members, we have advocated for clarity and consistency with respect to land access and permitting regulations, and we have formalized our thoughts through a position statement on land-use planning and land access that has formed the basis of our submissions to the federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

PDAC maintains that mineral exploration, mine development, and mining operations can be conducted in keeping with the principles of sustainable development and in harmony with the environmental, social, and economic priorities of aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. In our position statement, we maintain that the overarching goal of public policy and legislation for land-use planning and land access should be the development and implementation of a transparent and balanced process that applies impartial criteria appropriately, reconciles competing priorities fairly, and gives proper weight to the public interest. Achieving these objectives requires a process based on broad, inclusive representation across society that promotes the involvement of aboriginal peoples, local communities, interest groups, the exploration and mining sector itself, and the public at large.

In conclusion, I would like to thank this committee for giving us an opportunity to meet with you today. Scott and I would be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your opening statements.

We will now begin with our rounds of questioning, starting with Ms. Duncan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, and my thanks to the witnesses for their presentations and written materials.

I've noted your honesty in stating that, despite your considerable efforts to employ aboriginal peoples in your sector, only 1% of aboriginal peoples are in management a decade later. What investment does your sector put into educating aboriginals in management, engineering, geology, environmental sciences, and reclamation?

I'm raising reclamation because we had a previous witness from ECO Canada who shared some of the market analyses. By the way, thanks for your recommendation on the market analyses. Some of the most valuable work in this area is done by the federal environmental sector, which does market analyses and studies environmental employment. I know from being on that board that the highest potential employment for the future is in reclamation of contaminated sites, and that's why I'm asking about the investment in training local people in reclamation.

I also notice that you recommended a continuation of the ASEP program. We discovered today that the program is ending, and I'd like to hear whether you think that's worthwhile.

I also want to ask about the benefit agreements. I'm aware that there are a lot of benefit agreements between various mining corporations and aboriginal communities, but a concern is starting to be raised about what happens when one of the parties, the corporations, reneges on those agreements. There is currently one lawsuit before the courts between the Athabasca Chipewyan and one of the corporations in the oil sands, which is purportedly reneging on the benefit agreement. It's not clear whether there's consideration or whether those terms are enforceable. Do you think that instead, or in tandem, the government should be imposing those terms as a condition of approvals?

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Hébert: To start with the investment in education and training, it's not something we've quantified yet, but it's absolutely a top priority for mining companies because of the really dramatic labour shortage. They're investing more in recruitment, but they're investing more than ever before in retention. That means developing the existing workforce. The investment is at levels that have never been seen before. They frankly have no choice. The future of the mining companies relies on their ability to develop and retain their current workforce, notably the aboriginal community.

Ms. Linda Duncan: In what category...?

Mr. Paul Hébert: It is really across the entire spectrum of occupations.

There are definitely some examples of partnerships that are very effective. In the Raglan project in northern Quebec, in Ungava Bay, they're having success developing their workforce and having aboriginal people access higher-level jobs. In B.C. there are some successes as well.

They're also fraught with challenges. We're dealing with some fairly serious socio-economic challenges. Essential baseline skills levels within the aboriginal community are barriers to delivering the training needed for them to access those higher-level jobs. That relates back to the next item you mentioned, the ASEPs.

I don't have first-hand knowledge of ASEPs in other sectors, but I'm quite familiar with ASEPs in mining. I know they have been very successful in the amount of money they've been able to leverage from the private sector and in the quantity of people they've been able to train and get into jobs. They have been hugely successful: the B.C. Aboriginal Mine Training Association, the mine training organizations in all three territories, and mine training organizations with De Beers in Attawapiskat and Voisey's Bay. It has been said to me by people at HRSDC that the mining ASEP is really the poster child or the exemplary ASEP program. Having something in place to replace that ASEP program is critical in helping promote aboriginal participation in mining.

On IBAs and what happens if one party reneges, most IBAs include quite detailed conflict resolution mechanisms and provisions. I'm not familiar with the lawsuit you're talking about, but I would say the vast majority of IBAs are functioning quite well and yield very positive results for both parties.

Ms. Linda Duncan: One of the comments made recently—I've been in some discussions in Alberta—by the aboriginal community, particularly dealing with the oil sands mining sector, is that they would prefer to have a good portion of the training delivered in the community. Then those who are interested in getting into the sector wouldn't have to spend all that time out of their community. I'm wondering how much attention you're giving to the potential for actually delivering some of the training in the community.

• (1605)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: That's certainly the feedback we've been receiving as well. It poses a challenge when you move people to a central location for training and most of the post-secondary institutions in Canada are in larger urban centres. However, over the last few years we have seen an increase in satellite training centres, mobile training centres, and simulators. We can actually develop and implement simulators within the communities.

Part of the program I highlighted earlier under "Mining Essentials" really does focus on bringing the training into the community, bringing the mining companies into the community, and focusing not just on the trainee but on the community as a whole. It's something that is evolving.

If I can quickly address your last question on the mining sector's investment in training and education, there has really been a shift in the area of workforce planning in the mining sector. I've been involved in this industry for almost 10 years, and earlier on, mining workforce planning lasted a quarter or six months. Now we're seeing companies really taking a much more strategic view toward workforce planning, investing in training and education of their workforce for two, five, and ten years to coincide with their mining plans. So there has been a shift, and companies are now taking a much more strategic view toward workforce planning.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to turn to Mr. Wilks for seven minutes.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks, gentlemen, for being here today.

I come from a part of the world that is fairly rich in resources, with Teck Resources and five coal mines, so I'm quite familiar with the mining industry.

Having said that, given the proximity of many aboriginal communities to mining and exploration and development across Canada, what are the potential opportunities for mining activities to take place on first nations reserves, and what are the potential benefits for aboriginal communities from mining on reserve? As I understand it, about 1,200 aboriginal communities are located within 200 kilometres of producing mines or potential producing mines.

Mr. Paul Hébert: On-reserve mining traditionally has been a bit of a black box, quite frankly. Mining companies have been in the dark about what's required and what the processes are, and that's why we were heartened to learn that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has recently embarked on a process to modernize on-reserve mining regulations. They had a kick-off, a scoping-out meeting, just a couple of weeks ago in Toronto.

Definitely one would expect substantial potential, depending on the reserve. Reserves tend to be communities, and of course you won't have a mine in a community, but on neighbouring lands the potential is there.

What's needed, however, is certainty and clarity of process and access so that companies, and first and foremost the people doing the exploration, know what the rules of the game are and how to get access and how to partner with the communities to identify and define those resources.

Mr. David Wilks: I don't know if there's anything you want to add, Phil.

Mr. Philip Bousquet: Yes, I'd agree with Paul's remarks. I think the opportunity is there. What you would want through legislation and regulation is clarity, as Paul said. At the exploration end of things, you would need to be able to raise money for those projects, so you have to have clarity with respect to the mineral tenure, the permitting rules, and the regulatory structure that you have set up. But it certainly presents a great opportunity.

Mr. David Wilks: With that in mind, then, you had talked about mineral tenure and exploration as a couple of examples. To what extent are these opportunities being maximized, if we can get to that point with regard to on-reserve, and what can be done by your industry, by us, and by the aboriginal communities to enhance the potential benefits?

Mr. Philip Bousquet: At this stage, where people are discussing this and putting together papers that would frame how the structure would look, I think a role can be played by our association and others in terms of commenting on drafts that are being put together.

I'm sure our association would be pleased to do that. We try to do that with the provincial and federal governments whenever we can. I think receiving comment from practitioners, and receiving comment from those who are in the business of raising equity financing for projects, would be one part of this. There would be much more.

I did mention in my remarks our memorandum of understanding with the Assembly of First Nations. We cooperate closely with the AFN and other organizations, so it may be an opportunity for a multi-organization table of some sort that could review this.

•(1610)

Mr. David Wilks: Generally, and if you could expand a little further on that, what are the main impediments facing the mining companies wishing to participate in mining projects with first nations on reserve land?

Mr. Paul Hébert: My understanding is that it's a lack of understanding and awareness of what the processes are. When Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada embarked on their process, they asked the question of industry: are on-reserve mining regulations working? The answer from industry was that they weren't even aware of the regulations. They weren't even in a position to comment on what was positive and where there were areas for improvement.

That's why it's a positive move now that dialogue is beginning to take place, and if required, we can start to make either some substantive changes that can lead to economic development with on-reserve mining or at least disseminate the information to exploration and mining companies so they know what's involved.

Mr. David Wilks: A lot of mining companies, which are usually larger businesses, have the opportunity to potentially partner with aboriginal individuals and/or communities. Could you give me some of the examples you mentioned in your opening remarks? What are some of the positive aspects and what are some that are challenging?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Sure. One I would point to is not too far from your neck of the woods. It's actually a partnership between New Gold's New Afton mine and the Tk'emlups Indian Band. That is quite a far-reaching impact benefit agreement. They have a great partnership with the Tk'emlups Indian Band. The content of the agreement includes everything from environmental matters to HR, education, training, and contracting. It's a comprehensive partnership. The agreement is managed on an ongoing basis through a joint committee. Not only was it negotiated, but it's a living agreement that is jointly administered with the community. That would be one shining example I would point to.

I wouldn't necessarily point to any one in particular in terms of challenges. There are challenges across the board. They vary. Every community is a little bit different, or they can be very different from one to the next. They have their own challenges and their own resource limitations. They may have challenges in terms of their skills profiles and where their essential skills profiles lie to begin with. That's probably one of the biggest challenges. It's getting essential skills to the level where they need to be so that training can be delivered to access those jobs.

Mr. David Wilks: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilks.

We'll go to Ms. Bennett for seven minutes.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): As you know, the purpose of this study is to look at land use and sustainable economic development. Some of the issues are around the impact and benefit agreements or how we make sure that first nations are able to benefit from the resources extracted from their land.

If you were writing the report for this committee, what would be some of the recommendations?

Obviously, there seem to be some problems, even in terms of the legislative framework or the lack of clarity. People do not really know what's in the regulations. Also, if the regulations aren't good enough, what would you do to make them better? What would you do to have more people understand that it's not optional. And what would you do to maybe celebrate some of the ones that have worked really well. They could be sort of a blueprint for how this can work well.

If you were thinking of the researchers writing a couple of paragraphs explaining what works and what doesn't work, and then a couple of recommendations for tightening it up, what would you suggest we put in this report?

• (1615)

Mr. Scott Cavan (Program Director, Aboriginal Affairs, Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada): Is this specific to on-reserve activity? This is what you're examining, right?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: The basis of this study is pretty well on reserve. But obviously, we would love to hear what you would suggest in terms of territorial land as well.

Mr. Scott Cavan: Some of the pieces we stand for are government-side resource revenue-sharing, helping to create a sustainable environment, economic input into the communities, and helping to create capacity development to allow further

participation in the industry itself through government-side resource revenue-sharing.

Mr. Philip Bousquet: An example I might suggest would be the Paix des braves in Quebec. It goes back to 2002. It involved resource revenue-sharing from hydro, minerals, and energy. It results in annual payments, some of which contribute to the establishment of entrepreneurial initiatives. The Cree Mineral Exploration Board has a role in reviewing projects.

I think there are examples like that that you can look at in different parts of the country.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: In terms of the communities, obviously some have done this before, and for some this is their first one.

Do you think that communities have the capacity to get the best possible IBA for their communities? Or how do you build that capacity in terms of negotiating a deal?

Mr. Scott Cavan: Basically you're getting into whether the community has the capacity, be it access to the legal field, consultants, and the expertise needed.

You're talking about the last time, which was an impact benefit agreement, which was probably leading into a mine. We're dealing with this on the exploration side—early exploration agreements, MOUs, communications pieces, and protocols with communities.

Again, I think it falls to both sides. Both the communities and the smaller junior miners and exploration companies are not exactly experiencing the best capacity, and there is a training and education deficit in the aboriginal communities that's been well documented, of course. I know that some people will be talking about that.

Mr. Paul Hébert: The challenge is that most of the IBAs are private agreements, so it's difficult to get into the agreement and hold it up as a best practice. However, some are available, and Natural Resources Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada have an inventory of those IBAs. They have begun to catalogue a list of best practices in the negotiation and application of IBAs.

Those kinds of resources would be very useful for communities in the early stages, to let them know what kinds of resources they need and where they can get access to them so they can negotiate an agreement that's best for them.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Is there a concern that maybe some of the environmental assessments could be downloaded to the provinces? What would be your interpretation of the role of the federal government if environmental assessments were downloaded to the provinces and territories?

Mr. Paul Hébert: It's not my understanding that a downloading is being envisioned; it's more that it's an issue of elimination of duplication. In cases where there are two environmental assessments taking place, one federal and one provincial, the mechanism would be in place that only one assessment would stand. That could be either the provincial or the federal level, whichever agency is best positioned on a case-by-case basis.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Certainly in the territories, it seems there's a lack of clarity. The Northwest Territories compared to the Yukon was certainly pointed out to me when I was up there.

Is there anything you would want in our report that could move you more quickly to get the kind of certainty people need for exploration and/or mining?

• (1620)

Mr. Paul Hébert: In the far north, the territories, the one big issue would be the resolution of land claims, so that all parties can have a more clear understanding of where they stand and their authority. If I had to choose one, that's what it would be.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bennett.

Mr. Rickford.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for coming here today.

I want to congratulate PDAC on another successful convention. You had more than 30,000 people visiting, I believe. I might add, the prominence of aboriginal folks and organizations involved in the process is certainly a credit, Scott, to the aboriginal outreach that PDAC is doing. I know that the Mining Association of Canada and the Mining Industry's Human Resource Council are actively involved, so congratulations to you on those two activities.

Obviously, coming from the great Kenora riding, you can imagine that there is some mining activity going on there, and some vast potential in this regard.

I'll just share with all of my colleagues that I probably overcame one of the biggest fears I've ever had, and that was—for all my work with mining companies—going down to the deepest drill site at Goldcorp, at 6,300 feet, which is three times the height of the CN Tower. Minister Raitt and I managed to make our way down there last week, and it was a tremendous experience.

As my colleagues have said on both sides of this table, we are primarily talking about reserve activities for the purposes of this part of the study, and I think the conversation has developed nicely, or segued, if you will, into this whole idea of capacity building.

Scott, you alluded to it, and certainly Ryan made some comments in this regard. The minister of HRSDC, the minister of aboriginal affairs, and myself were pleased to announce an investment of more than \$700,000 into the Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education and Training Institute in Thunder Bay. You may be familiar with it.

This is going to be specifically to steer young people between the ages of 16 to 29 toward careers in the mineral or mining sector. The course is called Mining 101, and I think it fits nicely with this, guys, because in terms of on-community, it's really creating a baseline, if you will, of information for mining literacy on reserve for folks to make informed choices about what kind of job or career in the mining industry they might be interested in. I'll flesh that out in a question very shortly.

There are two elements to this course. One is online, for youth, primarily, who need—as we understand—to stay in their communities. Many of them want to, and many of them have to.

The second part is through the Sudbury community college, the Cambrian College SkyTech mobile training trades trailer, which is an innovation that is developing out in northwestern Ontario as well.

This is great news for Webequie First Nation and their work in the Ring of Fire, of course, and the potential that holds.

My questions, probably to Scott and Ryan, are along these lines.

In what areas have you been the most successful in terms of the kinds of work in the mining sector that first nations people are typically interested in? I know that some companies have an aboriginal liaison officer as well, which is one interesting career track.

What are the most successful ways of increasing mining literacy? This may be a really good example. You may have others.

Finally, there seem to be a lot of programs out there that hold tremendous potential. My colleague, Linda, mentioned earlier that ECO Canada is doing some capacity-building work there. I'm concerned that the ordinary, average first nation in an isolated community may not immediately know where to go and how to get there. Is there a coordinating effort afoot to put this menu or constellation of options, if you will, out there?

I'll stop there. Ryan and Scott, perhaps others, proceed.

• (1625)

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: Where to begin? You're absolutely correct that there is a plethora of mining and essential skills-related programs available to aboriginal communities, and it's sometimes very difficult to cut through the clutter of what does exist and what the best path is to move into a career—beyond just a job but really into a career—in the mining sector.

I don't think there's a cookie-cutter approach or one approach that works best, but it is a collection of tailored programs that fit the local community, and it's a partnership between either the community college or the ASETS or the ASEP or the mine.

What we've seen as having the most success is when you have a very active aboriginal community mining partner of some sort, be it an exploration company or a mining company, and some form of post-secondary or maybe even secondary—some form of formal education that is offered.

Increasing mining literacy and awareness of different careers is something that is absolutely required, because the potential is there. Bringing people and integrating them into the workforce has been part of what my organization has been aiming and striving for during the past five to six years. We work closely with ECO Canada and the Aboriginal Human Resource Council as well to try to achieve this.

Mr. Greg Rickford: Scott, just to cut to you quickly, because time goes by when we're on these questions, you mentioned Glenn Nolan, and I think this speaks to the prominence aboriginal Canadians have and are going to have in the future, and with you there's an opportunity for mentoring.

Again, I go back to the question. Are there mentoring and coordinating efforts afoot so that first nations living in an isolated community, whether they're actively involved in a site or not, can think about a mining career? Where do we plug in and who do we plug into—a great role model such as you, etc.?

Mr. Scott Cavan: I think there are a number of different programs under way, both provincially and probably nationally. On the national front you have the newly rebranded Indspire, formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, with careers in mining, which actively goes out into the secondary schools to teach about mining in a one-day course.

What we offer through the Mining Matters program is active in-community teaching of aboriginal youth about mining and mineral resources and the opportunities involved, and actually getting their hands involved in that. It's really about getting in and showing them, and when they can experience that on the ground, I think it resonates the best.

You talked about different outreach programs. You mentioned the Oshki-Pimache-O-Win. I understand they're looking at an online learning system. Again—

Mr. Greg Rickford: I think 40% of their intake, in fact.

Mr. Scott Cavan: As Ryan was saying, there's no cookie-cutter approach. You can't just say this is what is going to work. But developing on a regional basis and looking at the capacity of the regions.... Now you're talking about broadband infrastructure, and there are lots of pieces that have to come around about this. I think the idea of the trailers and the mobile training facilities to go into these—it's much harder in the remote far north, of course, and you'll understand that, being from Kenora.

The question is how we move that around. I think there needs to be a look at a better coordinated approach, because it's happening everywhere across the country. We're seeing the mine training centres starting to travel this way, and we might start to look at asking what's a better effort, to make sure we're not actually stepping on each other's toes and duplicating efforts.

Just to add one last thing, I know we'll probably be working with the AFN in and around trying to capture some of this, but I'll leave it there.

The Chair: Thank you.

Yes, we always run against the clock in this business.

We're going to Mr. Genest-Jourdain for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Gentlemen, I will speak in French. Bousquet, Hébert and Montpellier are francophone names. I will give you all my questions at once. You can decide who will answer them.

Do you think it would be a good idea for the industry players to consult aboriginal people living on a given territory, prior to the exploration stage in mining?

Could you tell us what the real effect of the positions and interests of the country's aboriginals regarding mineral development initiatives are, considering their absence at the decision-making level, within the Canadian mining industry? You talked about 1% or less.

Could you also tell us what you think about the real redistribution of wealth and social benefits stemming from resource extraction on a given territory, within the population? In your documents, you mentioned Attawapiskat. I don't need to tell you that the media have

exposed a fairly problematic social situation in that community. Once again, I submit this respectfully.

You can decide who will answer these questions.

• (1630)

Mr. Paul Hébert: I can begin by answering the last question.

The exposed situations in Attawapiskat make it clear that there are some considerable challenges involved. Those situations are making me wonder. For instance, we know that De Beers earned \$325 million through contracts with companies that belong to the Attawapiskat community. However, the profits are not being redistributed. I have no answer as to why; I don't know. There are clearly some challenges involved.

There are other examples of agreements that are working very well. In those cases, whole communities, and not only a few owners, are benefiting from the economic activity. Each case is unique, since each community is different. Every community has different capacities. It would be worthwhile to compare the agreements of different communities in order to determine what is working and what is not.

You are correct in saying that this is a challenge. I think that we should build on the successes and work on targeting the problems.

As for the pre-exploration consultations,

[English]

I think I'll defer to my colleagues at the PDAC.

Mr. Philip Bousquet: Thank you.

With respect to consultation and the crown's duty to consult, the first step that we take as an association is to offer guidance to our members through our program e3 Plus: A Framework for Responsible Exploration. It is something that is apart from regulations. They're good practice guidance for social engagement, for community engagement. Beyond that there is a lack of certainty in Canada as a result of the interpretation of Supreme Court decisions, and provincial governments are revising mining acts to try to keep up with those decisions. We're seeing that in a number of jurisdictions. For instance, Ontario introduced a new mining act three and a half years ago. Now, after extensive consultation they're developing regulations that would have the intent of addressing the crown's duty to consult and those duties that can be passed on to third parties such as our members.

Mr. Scott Cavan: On the last piece, one of the principles we abide by is we ask the industry, or if they ask for our advice, to engage the community early and meaningfully throughout the process from start to finish.

The Chair: Mr. Boughen, you have five minutes.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to add my voice. Welcome to the panel. Thank you for sharing part of your day with us.

In what ways does your organization work with aboriginal communities to improve environmental stewardship in mining activities? Can you highlight a couple of those for us?

•(1635)

Mr. Paul Hébert: Sure. Members of the Mining Association of Canada are bound to participate in a program called Towards Sustainable Mining, or TSM for short. TSM outlines a number of performance standards in a number of areas, ranging from tailings management to GHG emissions and energy use, to community consultation and aboriginal engagement.

That program is overseen by a community-of-interest panel, which includes representation from civil society and a number of groups, including first nations groups. They provide governance and administration input to the program at an oversight level. That translates on the ground into how our member companies apply and use TSM in their environmental management and increase their environmental performance.

Mr. Ray Boughen: What would you say are your best practices in this regard?

Mr. Paul Hébert: I would point to TSM. It is an award-winning program. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, at the PDAC, we won an award. We won awards from the GLOBE Foundation. We've had recognition from Five Winds.

TSM is exceptional, in that it requires companies to publicly report against all of these protocols. Every three years they must submit to third-party independent verification. I would point to that as a best practice of a program that's really leading to increased performance from industry, in partnership with communities.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thank you.

Typically, who is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the social and environmental impacts of mining activities throughout the life of a mine? Who's the boss from start to finish?

Mr. Paul Hébert: It has definitely become part of the culture of mining companies now to report on an ongoing basis on corporate social responsibility, community engagement, and environmental performance. It's part of the annual reporting culture, and it's often on more than an annual basis. They realize it is integral to their social licence to operate, so they need to report on it and demonstrate continuous improvement on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boughen.

Mr. Bevington, you have five minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Good afternoon, and thanks for being here today.

Of course, in my riding mining is huge, and we want to keep it that way.

I know you have great issues around expanding employment, and I understand that.

I'm a little curious about some of the statistics. On the 300,000 employees you mention in your handout, is that the total industry?

Mr. Paul Hébert: Correct. That's exploration, mining, smelting, and refining. Semi-fabrication is captured within that as well.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Within the aboriginal mining statistics, you say they account for 7.5% of the mining workforce. But it's less

than that, isn't it? You only have 4,500 people working there. You must be talking about a particular section of the mining industry.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Yes. The way the workforce is sliced and diced differs according to StatsCan definitions of national occupational classifications.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: You'd need 22,000 aboriginal workers to make up 7.5% of 300,000. You must be talking about a particular section. That's what I'm trying to get at.

Mr. Paul Hébert: It's a more modest definition of the sector that doesn't include semi-fabrication, for example. That's a substantial portion.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Right. That's 200,000 to 250,000 people.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Do you know what the baseline number is for the 7.5%?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: The definition of the industry that we use for our labour market information is approximately 200,000 people for the mining sector, and aboriginal people constitute about 7.5% of the mining industry.

•(1640)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: But you've got 4,500 people there. That would make an industry of about 60,000, if that was 7.5%. So you're talking about a section of the industry that's 60,000 people.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: That number is probably focused exclusively on extraction.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay, so we're talking about extraction here.

Do you have any statistics for all the other fields?

Mr. Paul Hébert: No, we don't at this time.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay. What percentage of the 60,000 people would be management or supervisory?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: I can give you a ballpark, and it depends again how you quantify it, but if you look at the engineering and geoscience side of the extraction industry, it's about 10%. That tends to be the mine managers and the supervisors. I would give you a ballpark of 10% to 15% of that.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: And aboriginal people make up 1%. That would be 45 people across Canada who are management or supervisory in that whole industry. Within the Northwest Territories, surely we must have at least half of those. I can probably name half of those people. Is the rest of the industry really so devoid of management and supervisory people?

I'm really curious about that number. My experience in the Northwest Territories is that we're doing far better than that, that there are far more than 1%. Maybe you could illuminate that for us.

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: When you look at the definition of the mining industry by NAICS and NOC-S, and you define the mining industry under a certain statistical lens, there are not a significant number of aboriginal people, who self-identify as aboriginal people, in supervisory roles. That I do believe is increasing, but for a number of reasons the mining industry has not had a tremendous amount of success at moving aboriginal people into supervisory roles. A number of supervisory occupations do require a significant amount of post-secondary education. Most of the people in supervisory roles in mining are engineers, either mining engineers or geoscientists, and that has been a barrier for aboriginal advancement, there's no question.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Are you saying that 10% or 15% of that population at the mine are university educated and would be using those skills?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: For the mining industry as a whole, that's correct.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Now, the—

The Chair: Mr. Bevington, we're out of time. I do apologize, but that's what happens when the clock's running.

Some information that might be helpful to you, Mr. Bevington, is on the second page of the Library of Parliament document. It's the StatsCan information with regard to employment in the mining sector.

Mr. Payne, you have five minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

And I thank the witnesses for coming today.

I was interested when you talked about 110,000 new workers by 2011, which obviously means there's probably going to be a lot of exploration and projects going on.

In your estimation, what's the potential for mining in the north to expand and provide a stable economy for northerners?

Mr. Paul Hébert: The potential is substantial. It's quite dramatic. With increased geoscience baseline knowledge in the north comes that increase of potential. Those buoyant commodity prices that I talked about are driving a lot of exploration and a lot of development. We've already seen some new projects come online, whether it's Meadowbank or others.

They come with some challenges as well. The far north comes with some infrastructure challenges, for example—it's far from rail and ports and what we need to get our goods to market—and some fairly substantial human resources challenges as well, for finding an adequate workforce nearby or flying them in from wherever we can get them.

But there's no question that the potential is huge, and we're talking in the billions of dollars. When we talk about the \$140 billion opportunity over the next five years, those are multi-billion dollar opportunities in all jurisdictions across the country, with the exception of P.E.I.

• (1645)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay. Do you have any idea of the number of projects in the North? You talked in the billions of dollars. Do you

have any estimated projects that might go ahead in the next few years?

Mr. Paul Hébert: I don't have a list of projects with me, but I could definitely get back to you with projects that are in the EA process and what stage they're at. That is something we have.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay. That would be great.

We've also heard over the last little while about the complex regulatory regimes in the north, especially in the NWT. At the same time, there are obviously immense opportunities available. From your point of view, what would be the key improvements to the regulatory system that would allow for the sustainable resources development environment in the north to generate jobs for northerners and all Canadians?

Mr. Paul Hébert: There are a few.

Starting with Nunavut, there would be the completion of the Nunavut regulatory framework that's ongoing. That would provide some clarity. There is a double-bonding issue in the north that has recently come to light, where companies have to post reclamation bonds and performance bonds more than once because there is a jurisdictional overlap.

Some Fisheries Act reform could be quite useful. We need, for example, effluent regulations for non-metal mines. A challenge that I've already mentioned, and would reiterate, would be renewed funding for aboriginal skills training. That has been very successful and would be an enabling piece to help northerners take full advantage of their resource endowment.

Mr. LaVar Payne: What I'm hearing is that some simplification processes need to be in place for the regulations, and eliminate any duplications that might be there.

Mr. Paul Hébert: Yes, absolutely. Clarity and certainty is the mantra of industry. They really need to know what they're getting into and to have some predictability concerning the process so that they can raise capital and provide a return on that investment.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I believe you mentioned something about the De Beers diamond mine.

Could you describe how the aboriginal communities and other northerners have benefited from the development of those diamond mines? Has this record of benefits been duplicated in other communities and in the territories?

Mr. Paul Hébert: I can speak to the Victor Mine situation at Attawapiskat. As I mentioned, since the start of construction roughly five years ago, over \$325 million in contracts have been awarded to Attawapiskat First Nation businesses. That's a community of only 1,800 people on reserve. Of the 500 employees at De Beers Victor Mine, 100 are from Attawapiskat. That's 20% of the workforce from that one community. Those are examples.

In 2011 alone, more than \$51 million in contracts were awarded to Attawapiskat First Nation businesses. On a previous question, some challenges remain around understanding how benefits can accrue to members of the entire community versus a handful of business owners. That happens better in some communities than in others. Getting to the heart of why it works when it does work is of primary interest to industry because they want to see it succeed.

Another first nations community I would point to is the Kamloops Indian Band in B.C. that I mentioned earlier. It's quite an entrepreneurial community, and a number of businesses have been formed. There's a lot of benefit making its way to the community.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms. Hughes, we'll turn to you for five minutes.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): My colleague wants to ask a question first.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Hébert, you raised that you have called on the government to make changes to the Fisheries Act.

Have you requested that the fisheries habitat provisions be removed?

Mr. Paul Hébert: No, we have not.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Okay. Carol, go ahead.

• (1650)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Thank you very much.

You talked about the ASEP agreement, the ASEP program, and the fact that funding right now is going to be ending. I'm assuming that you're part of the sector councils as well. On the sector council piece, how much of your budget is funded by the federal government?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It changes year over year, but currently about 75% of our budget comes from the sector council program and about 25% comes from industry.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: We had ECO Canada here. We also had ECO Canada yesterday at HRSDC, as well as BioTalent Canada, who talked about the impact this will have. If you're funding is 75%, do you think industry will come to your rescue to help you out?

Mr. Ryan Montpellier: It's a very good question.

We are in the midst of an organizational transformation at present. We have enjoyed a tremendous amount of support in kind from the mining and mineral exploration sector over the course of the last 15 years, and we have tremendous partnerships with the mining sector. There is no question that the changes Minister Finley announced to the sector council program will have an impact on our ability to continue to fulfill our mandate to identify and address the challenges.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Just with respect to the impact, what would the impact be on you if they couldn't continue?

Mr. Paul Hébert: The impact would be significant. As Ryan said, we're in the process of figuring out a way forward from here and what role industry can play in making sure it does continue in some way, shape, or form.

We do need the labour market intelligence they provide, and we've come to rely on the credentialling programs they deliver as well.

I would venture to say that MiHR will continue. The question is, on what scale?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: I'm going to throw out a couple of questions, and then I'll leave it there.

Because there was a concern raised this week that Ontario laws have not included duty to consult first nations in advance of exploration permits or issuance of leases, I'm wondering if you have any comments on that.

As well, again, with the ASEP program, we know it's been very helpful for the aboriginal communities and aboriginal Canadians. I have a brief from the Mining Association, who were at the finance committee.

I wonder if you could elaborate a bit more on that. I think it would be detrimental to not have that program in place.

Are you aware of anything else that's going to be put in place to subsidize that?

Mr. Paul Hébert: On the duty to consult, I'll let my colleagues at PDAC answer.

As far as the ASEP program and what's going to replace it, I'm aware of two pots of money. One is a strategic partnership initiative, which spans a number of government departments, including Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Aboriginal Affairs. I think that if funding hasn't been secured by mine training organizations, it's imminent that they'll be accessing some of those dollars. Then there is the strategic partnership fund, and that's at HRSDC. Some of those moneys are starting to flow to mine training organizations.

I don't know that they're on the same scale as what the ASEP's were, so we'll continue to be advocating for more support.

You're absolutely right. They've been hugely important for communities, for industry, and in helping us make sure we can get the right people with the right skills.

Mr. Philip Bousquet: With respect to Ontario and the mining law, the bill has been passed. There is a new act, but the regulations are still in development. In fact, on the Ontario environmental registry, the ministry recently posted draft rules that could work their way into regulations, and those are still open for comment.

The minister also has what's called a minister's Mining Act advisory committee. PDAC has representation on that, as does the Ontario Prospectors Association, first nations organizations, and environmental groups. That's a body that advises the minister as well.

What's happening in Ontario is not a complete story yet. We still have the draft rules out for comment on the EBR, and after that the government will have to consider and then gazette regulations. There is still that uncertainty in Ontario. We're doing our best to offer our advice on what we think a workable regime would be.

• (1655)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Do I have any more time?

The Chair: You are out of time, and I think we're pretty much done with our final round of questioning.

Colleagues, unless there is anything else, we will allow our witnesses to leave.

We thank you for your testimony today. We certainly appreciate your answers and the contribution you've given to our study. I'm certain you'll find much of what you spoke about in our report that will be developed over the next number of months. Thanks so much.

Colleagues, we'll now suspend for a few minutes, and then we'll come back in camera for committee business.

The meeting is suspended.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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