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• (1705)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting No. 34 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, February 3, 2022, the committee is meeting to study anticipated labour shortages in the Canadian transportation sector.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

Members of the committee, we have appearing before us today, from the Canadian Ferry Association, Mr. Serge Buy, chief executive officer.

[*Translation*]

We will hear the director of government and stakeholder relations of the Chamber of Marine Commerce, Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce.

[*English*]

From the Freight Management Association of Canada, we have Mr. John Corey, president.

Before I turn to our witnesses for their opening remarks, I'd like to begin by turning it over to the clerk for some housekeeping. I believe we have to elect a vice-chair.

Mr. Clerk, go ahead.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): Thank you for that.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): I would nominate Mark Strahl.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): I was going to nominate the same.

The Clerk: It has been moved that Mark Strahl be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mark Strahl duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

Voices: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Congratulations, Mr. Strahl.

We will begin the opening remarks with Mr. Serge Buy.

Mr. Buy, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Serge Buy (Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Ferry Association): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for inviting the Canadian Ferry Association to speak on this important issue.

First, let me provide you some background on the sector.

Ferries in Canada annually transport over 60 million passengers, 23 million vehicles and billions of dollars' worth of goods. Our members provide a crucial linkage to communities. They cross rivers in isolated communities in rural and northern Canada, an example that most do not fully realize. There are free ferry crossings along the Dempster Highway in the Northwest Territories to get to Inuvik; when ferries do not run, the cost of goods significantly increases in that city.

Ferries bring not only people but also most goods to islands such as Newfoundland and Vancouver Island. We also provide urban transit solutions in various municipalities, such as Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver and others.

The Canadian Ferry Association represents most ferry operators across Canada, from Crown corporations to indigenous, provincial, territorial and municipal governments and private operators. We also represent some of the suppliers to the sector.

The issue of labour shortages is not new in the marine sector. Indeed, we have an aging workforce. An informal survey of our members sent out in 2019 showed that about 55% to 62% of the employees holding senior positions were able to retire within five years. The pandemic has made the issue even more pressing. We have seen unprecedented levels of retirement in the past couple of years.

The result is simple. There are increasing numbers of ferry crossings that are cancelled due to labour shortages. This weekend, some ferry crossings between Kingston and Wolfe Island in Ontario were briefly cancelled, as the operator was looking to replace a crew member. You can see weekly in the media instances of crew shortages on the west coast, the east coast and indeed throughout Canada, even in the Prairies, where this is the number one issue for our operators there.

The brief we submitted to the committee provides some of our recommendations. To be clear, Mr. Chair, there is no magic wand that will solve the issue. There are multiple directions to be explored, and each will have an impact.

The financial impact of labour shortages in the ferry sector is important. It means goods not arriving or arriving late. It means higher prices for some products. It means that employees are not getting to work because they can't get the ferry. It also means that people may not be getting home in time or getting to their hospital appointments, etc.

Ultimately, it is about communities. That's why it is essential for us to remember that when ferries do not run, entire communities are affected.

There are many considerations. I would like to explore some with you.

Immigration will not solve all problems, but it is an important avenue to look at. We thank Transport Canada for having taken some steps in the right direction, with support from Global Affairs, on the signing of agreements recognizing credentials, but more can be done, and more needs to be done soon.

Technology is also an important consideration, but the regulations that need to accompany the use of new technology also need to follow, and we're seeing challenges in that.

Can working conditions be improved? Absolutely, always, but I would say that ferry operators are normally employees of choice, and working conditions are very good already. Raising salaries may attract a few people, but then others will raise their salaries, and this endless race to poach each other's employees will end up benefiting no one.

Employers, unions and training institutions will have a role to play. This is why, for example, you will see some recommendations in our brief that deal with hybrid, in-person, and virtual training.

The recommendations provided in our brief are in four categories: international recruitment, where, again, signing agreements with other countries is essential; training, from virtual training to changing the requirement that sees institutions in the marine sector refuse international students; modernizing, in terms of crewing requirements that deal with technology, and the need to modernize some regulations and adopt a risk-based approach; and data, where better data collection needs to occur to have a clearer picture of the existing issues.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to questions. Thank you.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Buy.

[*Translation*]

Our next witness is Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce from the Chamber of Marine Commerce.

Mr. Morel-Laforce, you have five minutes.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce (Director, Government and Stakeholder Relations, Chamber of Marine Commerce): Mr. Chair, honourable members of the committee, I am grateful to you for giving us the opportunity to speak with you today.

[*English*]

The Chamber of Marine Commerce represents more than 100 marine industry stakeholders, including major Canadian and American shippers, ports, terminals and marine service providers, as well as Canadian domestic ship owners.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian marine sector moves goods and people everywhere in Canada. Of all the transportation modes, ours is the one that has the least impact on the environment.

[*English*]

During the pandemic, seafarers and shore personnel were designated essential workers and have continued their important work to ensure that Canada's supply chain remains resilient and responsive to deliver the goods that Canadians count on.

[*Translation*]

Canada has an extensive network of private docks and public ports used for international trade and moving people, all of which underpin national industries. Some 200 Canadian ships are operated in the country for commercial purposes, which include trade between Canada and the U.S., and domestic trade as well. The Canadian marine sector, both private and public, has over 1,000 employers and more than 100,000 professional employees.

[*English*]

Helping to build the domestic marine sector workforce ultimately benefits other key sectors of the economy—agriculture, construction, manufacturing, natural resources and tourism—that rely heavily on having access to marine transportation for their supply chain requirements.

[*Translation*]

The marine industry falls under federal regulations which cover most of the positions on a commercial vessel. However, the federal government offers little support to training institutes and to students in the marine sector. The federal government should provide regular funding to support the training of new employees for the private sector, the Coast Guard and other areas of our sector where we are lacking personnel.

Unfortunately, my colleague, Julia Fields from the Canadian Marine Industry Foundation, could not be here with us today, so I will give the presentation that she prepared.

[English]

The Canadian Marine Industry Foundation was launched in 2020 to help address workforce development challenges in the private and public marine sector. Our partners include employers, such as marine shipping companies; unions; pilots; marine colleges; as well as key government departments that have maritime responsibilities, including the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada and the Transportation Safety Board.

Like our multimodal partners in trucking and rail, we have a tremendous challenge ahead. The Canadian marine sector is already struggling to fill positions across the country, and in recent years labour shortages have even led to ships being idle temporarily. Marine colleges are finding it difficult to hire teachers, and government agencies are competing against private companies for the same small and aging talent pool. For the most part, the marine industry operates efficiently and often quietly away from the public eye. Consequently, awareness of marine sector careers is low. Most youth and those looking for a second career do not think of seafaring or many related career paths within the industry.

You should be aware that labour market data for the marine sector is scarce, and what does exist is usually dated or incomplete. However, a recent study conducted by Transport Canada found that 43% of the Canadian marine transportation workforce is expected to retire over the next 10 years. This figure is even higher in critical positions, such as engineering officers and deck officers. Transport Canada estimates that there will be a need to hire approximately 19,000 new workers over the next 10 years.

It is important to note that building our future pipeline is an urgent problem, as the marine sector depends on an ongoing talent pool willing to undergo specific training at all levels. It is a skill-intensive industry for shoreside and, especially, seagoing positions. For example, becoming a captain on a larger commercial ship can take six to eight years.

We believe the federal government could help us in three key areas. These are areas in which many other sectors have received government assistance.

The first is working with us to improve marine sector labour force data analysis to better identify the true scope of the problem and to benchmark and track progress.

The second area is funding to help increase awareness, as a variety of marine career paths, high wages and high job match rates are largely unknown to the general public, particularly high school students.

The third is to work with the sector to improve the availability, reach and funding opportunities of training programs. There are limited numbers of marine training facilities or colleges in Canada, and many prospective students would need to travel and pay for both program tuition and living expenses. As a result, marine training can be difficult to access for many communities and also for

workers already in the industry who are looking to upgrade their skills and licences.

As an example, two of our college members have recently applied for funding to develop new program offerings that will help lower the overall cost of training and increase marine training accessibility for first nations and equity-deserving groups. These programs include increasing online courses and accelerating the adoption of virtual reality and simulation in marine training.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the marine industry in Canada.

• (1715)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Morel-Laforce.

[English]

Next, we have Mr. Corey.

Mr. Corey, the floor is yours. You have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Mr. John Corey (President, Freight Management Association of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today about anticipated labour shortages in the Canadian transportation sector.

The FMA represents purchasers of freight transportation in Canada, including rail, marine, air and trucking. I hope I'm in the right meeting, because I will be speaking about rail and trucking labour issues.

Like other G7 countries, we have an aging population and a low birth rate. Our recent COVID experience has highlighted the reality that there are not enough skilled workers to fill all vacancies. Coupled with the pandemic, work-life balance has become a more important factor for workers. Salary alone is no longer a chief motivator.

How is this affecting transportation services and the supply chain? We have all experienced the supply chain chaos that was exacerbated by COVID. At the beginning of the pandemic, Transport Canada deemed both rail and trucking services to be essential. Truckers and rail workers helped Canada continue to function during COVID by continuing to move vital food, fuel, PPE, chemicals and other necessary materials. Without this transportation service, the effect of the pandemic would have been much worse.

Even though transportation workers performed admirably and the job got done, there are two main labour problems.

First, we have an aging workforce. Generally, the baby boomers who powered the economy through the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s have left the workforce or are retiring en masse. There are not enough skilled workers to adequately replace them. Not everyone can work from home.

The truck driver shortage continues to be a problem. The Conference Board of Canada now finds that the average truck driver's age is 46 years, compared to the average for all workers, which is 41.5 years. The industry needs to attract younger workers. It's estimated that there are 23,000 driver vacancies right now, and that will go up to 56,000 by 2024. This does not bode well for the Canadian economy, going forward.

In the rail industry, rail crew and locomotive shortages—not railcars—are recurring problems through periods of negative network fluidity. There is a great concern in the shipper community that the above-average grain crop this year, the coming winter and the staff shortages will create chaos on the rails, going forward.

The second employment issue is a changing attitude toward work. Workers are looking at work differently today from how they did in the past. COVID did not cause this change, but it has certainly sped it up. Working from home, virtual meetings and the demand for a better work-life balance are issues currently on the table.

Employee turnover in the trucking sector is very high—around 70%. Drivers routinely leave their employer or the industry. This turnover can be attributed to long hours, pressure to deliver, poor food and rest conditions on the road, and lack of recognition and appreciation.

In the rail industry, the practice of precision scheduled railroading, operations focusing on sweating the assets, does not apply only to equipment. Staff is cut to a bare minimum, resulting in increased pressure on the employees who are left.

In the U.S., railways and unions are currently working out their labour agreements. Although wages will go up 24% over the next three years, some union members are not ratifying agreements, because they say management holds no regard for their quality of life—illustrated by their stubborn reluctance to provide a higher quantity of paid time off, especially for sickness. Employees feel management is more concerned about operating ratios and profits than workers' well-being. It's no wonder they can't find anyone to employ.

What are the possible solutions?

One way to increase the number of workers available in the short term is by increasing immigration. I understand this solution may not be that simple, but it is worth the effort. Let's remember that Canada is a country built with the help of people from many places.

Pay an hourly wage to truck drivers, which will prioritize safety, thereby reducing the “need to get there at any cost” mentality. Require new energy-efficient trucks and encourage digitalization of the industry. Make trucking a skilled trade; many trades require an apprentice program and mentoring, especially in Europe. Make trucking a vocation instead of a default career. Ensure there is sufficient funding for the infrastructure necessary for the future. Ensure there are more safe places for drivers to eat and rest.

• (1720)

Railways need to be more cognizant of the labour market realities and their customers' service requirements when downsizing their workforce in response to temporary volume downturns. Excessive cuts followed by deliberately slow restaffing should not be an option. Leave some slack in the system, and make the supply chain more resilient.

Provide better working conditions for rail workers, with less punitive action for legitimate time off. Having more workers working fewer hours results in safer working conditions and a happier and therefore more productive workforce.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Corey.

We'll begin our round of questioning today with Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis, the floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Thank you so much.

My first question is going to go to Mr. Morel-Laforce.

We've heard a lot of discussion about labour shortages. I am aware that there was approximately a 20% reduction in grain shipment last year in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. You spoke about some of the collateral effects of the labour shortages and you mentioned that even ships were remaining idle because of the labour shortages.

I'd like to talk about how that impacts our food supply chain. I'm assuming that this also created a problem of congestion at the ports because of the shortage of labour, because you would have shipping containers sitting at the ports longer.

Is there anything you think the government could do legislatively in order to modernize the Canada Marine Act to help with this problem? That's my concern.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: It is a vast question.

On the grain shipments, most of the grain will be exported in bulk cargo, so your typical route will be going either west or east. In the case of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence, the cargo will be moved by train, let's say to Thunder Bay. From there, it will be put on a laker and brought further east for export. Most of the grain in the country is being exported.

In that regard, the seaway has a capacity right now at about 50%, so we could double the number of ships crossing the seaway today without much impact on traffic. That's certainly something we could do, although manning vessels and manning them in the future could become a difficult thing to do.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I understand that currently the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway are operating at just 50% capacity. Is that correct?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Yes. Right now we could double the number of ships sailing in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence with the current infrastructure we have.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: The reason you haven't been able to increase the usage of the waterways to alleviate pressures on the primary ports is this inherent labour shortage problem.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: It is, and I would say that container shipping is highly limited right now because of CBSA regulations that prohibit containers moving on ships. They can be moved on trains or trucks, but they cannot be moved by ship. We know that several of our port members within the Great Lakes are asking to have sufferance warehouses where they could actually host those containers, which is something that is not happening.

• (1725)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I understand that the Canada Marine Act limits the Canadian port authorities' ability to generate additional financing and remain competitive by actually limiting the ability to develop inland ports. The development of inland ports would reduce congestion at primary ports. In places like Vancouver, we know there are inland ports, but those ports are owned by the Singapore port authority.

Do you have any explanation why the government permits Singapore to own inland ports, but not Canadians?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I am not familiar with that port, in particular.

What I do know is that port members are currently anxious to see the port modernization act tabled in Parliament. They have several requests. They would like to develop their land and also expand their capacity to borrow, to make more development. That is certainly something that port members are keen to see in upcoming amendments to the port modernization act.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Is there anything specifically that you believe this government can do to remedy the unfair treatment of Canadian port authorities?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I believe we could use the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway to their full capacity to alleviate pressure on other modes of transport that have been touched by the pandemic or that are at capacity. We can think about our road system, which is already congested. If we put more containers on ships, rather than on trucks, we would move more product faster inland without congesting the highways.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: That's not necessarily fixed by having inland ports. It's just getting the product to the rail.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The fix would come with regulations. We would need to see CBSA regulations amended to allow for the movement of containers via the national waterways.

We would also need to see the CBSA expand and approve more sufferance warehouses. I hear there are 17 applications right now on the CBSA's desk that are not being processed. That could certainly help leverage the container problems in this country.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Are those warehouses paid for by the CBSA? Who pays for those warehouses?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The CBSA will provide the agents who will process the imports. That's a key part. There are a series of security requirements that need to be followed. What I have heard from members who would like to see that happen is that they're ready to commit the capital and make the investment to make this a reality. What they are waiting for is the regulatory approval.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: What are the main government policies—

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Lewis.

Next, we have Mr. Badawey.

The floor is yours. You have six minutes.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the line of questioning from Ms. Lewis. It's nice to see the appreciation that she has for the Great Lakes. I see Mr. Masse here from the NDP, as well, who has been a real champion for the Great Lakes. Brian, I am glad to see you here.

I have to agree with the comment earlier. The bottom line is that the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence will create the fluidity that this country needs to bring trade not only domestically but internationally, to strengthen our overall trade performance.

I have to be very specific, especially now that we're digging deeper into the CTA review that was completed in 2015 by David Emerson; the transportation and logistics strategy reports that this committee has both commissioned and completed in the interim, and hopefully in the future and the final stage; the ports modernization review, which has already been mentioned; the supply chain report that we've embarked on; and now the labour strategy. They're all part and parcel together.

The final comments before I get to my question are these. There's no doubt that we understand that the partners include the companies, the labour and the supply chain within the marine industry, the trucking industry, the rail industry and the air industry. We understand the effects on the overall supply chain when it comes to labour shortages. Ships are docking at docks with no captains, no cooks, no engineers, no deckhands and no mates. The ship's docked. That cargo is now held one day, two days, three days or maybe a week in getting to port. We also understand that the effects on the multimodal partners are great as well. It's a domino effect. The ship docks, and the trucks and trains wait. They have nothing to carry, because it's still sitting on the ship.

What do we do about it? We're moving forward now with a strategy that, I would only suspect, is not specific to one of these different methods of transportation, but is a multimodal transportation labour strategy that includes all methods of transportation.

With that, I'm going to ask all three of you the same question. Jump in as you see fit.

I'll give you an example from the Niagara region. We are now embarking on the construction and building of a Great Lakes innovation and training facility that will include education vis-à-vis the environment of the Great Lakes and its ecosystem, as well as the economic side when it comes to working with companies and the unions—such as the SIU and others—and, of course, other NGOs, to be part of that facility from the operating standpoint.

The key is to integrate the distribution and logistics, working hand in hand with up-to-date movement of goods along strategic trade corridors—such as that on the Great Lakes—integrated with road, rail and air, and aligned with up-to-date data analysis leading to integrated management. My point is that it's not just about the person driving the vehicle, truck, ship, plane or train. It's also about how it's moved and the training that goes along with that.

The question is to all three of you. How do you see that playing out? How do you see the trucks, trains, rail and boats moving, not only in terms of the product, but also in an integrated fashion and, therefore, the training that's needed to accomplish that?

• (1730)

Mr. John Corey: I'll go first, if that's okay, gentlemen.

Right now, we have a supply chain that is really silos. Each member of the supply chain does what's best for that particular company or group. What you're talking about is coordination of that supply chain so that the most effective and efficient movements are made. That's going to take a lot of political will, if I could use that term, to force the members of the supply chain to be on the same team.

Shippers want that to happen, because “what's good for me” is good initially, but if everyone pulls together, it's going to be good for Canada in the long run. We're going to become a much more effective, efficient trading partner, and that's going to be good for everyone, because it trickles down.

The question is, how do you do that? I think that's the conundrum we have. The report that came out from the supply chain task

force I think is a good start. There are some interesting ideas in there. How do we do that?

A lot of things are already in place that can help us have a more effective, efficient supply chain. Strengthening the Canada Transportation Act is one of them. There is legislation already there to regulate railways, which are, in this country—let's be honest—monopolies, and there are ways to level that playing field, but there has to be some will to actually do what needs to be done to level that playing field.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Corey.

Go ahead, Mr. Buy.

Mr. Serge Buy: You talked about coordination, and indeed, there needs to be better coordination of the supply chain. Some recommendations were made to the task force. Other committees are also studying the supply chain, so I'm going to focus on the labour shortage, if you don't mind, which is the study of this committee.

You talked about training. You don't train a marine worker in the same way that you train a truck driver. While you can coordinate certain things in training, on that side it's a little more difficult to coordinate training. However, the coordination of the supply chain is essential. I will give you that.

What the government can do to help at the present time is to look at some of the legislation it has on the training side and modernize some of that legislation. The Canada Shipping Act can be looked at, to be modernized a bit, to enable more flexibility for training institutions to look at foreign students, as an example, or to enable virtual hybrid training. You can train a doctor virtually, partially, in a hybrid model, but you can't train a marine worker in a hybrid model right now.

We know that there were some movements made, but the movements are very slow, sir. I think your help and the help of this committee on the labour shortage is essential to drive the agenda a bit faster.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Buy.

You're next, Mr. Morel-Laforce.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I think the supply chain task force report that was released recently highlights the need for more data sharing. I think that if funding is made available and there's support for doing more of it, and you link that to an updated curriculum where you have seafarers who can handle the information that's provided to them, we can be more efficient. We can deliver faster—absolutely.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Morel-Laforce.

That is exactly what I'm drilling down to. It's basically not working in silos, not training people to just simply drive trucks, steer ships or navigate ships, trains or planes. It's also the next layer, which is in fact that data integration. They're being trained to do what they are actually disciplined to do with respect to driving, navigating, flying or engineering, but also, on top of that, the next layer is that integration of distribution logistics systems so that they're being trained to do that as well. Then, of course, it means working all together in a multimodal fashion to get the word out there so that people are actually interested in getting into the industry.

Would you find that an advantage?

• (1735)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Badawey.

[Translation]

Now we have Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have six minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Mr. Morel-Laforce and Mr. Buy.

During the last legislature, my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, Maxime Blanchette-Joncas, the MP for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, sponsored Bill C-281, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (certificate of competency), after listening to the grievances of the Institut maritime du Québec, which is based in Rimouski. A good number of international students were coming to Canada to learn how to pilot our boats and then, sadly, once they had finished their training, they had to go back to their home countries because they needed a permanent residency visa or a certificate of competency in order to work in their field.

I think we should amend the act, especially in light of the labour shortage, because those students learned how to use our system and were trained here. They could easily pilot our boats.

I would like to know if you would be in favour of amending the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, in order to allow people who have been trained here to stay.

Mr. Serge Buy: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Actually, that is one of the 10 recommendations contained in the document submitted to your committee. That bill contained some interesting measures. I spoke recently with representatives from the Institut maritime du Québec, the IMQ. The Canadian Association of Marine Training Institutes made a request to Transport Canada in June and is waiting for a reply. There will definitely be discussions concerning hybrid projects.

That said, in the case of foreign students, we need to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001. That is one of our recommendations and I think it is an excellent one. This is not a problem for other professions. Why should it be in the marine sector? We would welcome such an amendment.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I completely agree, and I would add that we should look at the immigration system, whether that means recognizing foreign credentials or simply identifying foreign candidates and bringing them into the system. We are seeing that the process takes an inordinate amount of time. Even if many positions on a ship are given priority status by Immigration Canada, in reality, it takes over two years between the time a candidate is selected by a company that would like to hire that person and the moment when that person has the right to work in Canada. It's essentially a problem of resources.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: If I understand you correctly, you are also talking about a problem with processing times for foreign worker applications. I don't know if we can establish this conclusively, but there are few businesses in the marine sector in my riding, even though it includes the St. Lawrence River shoreline. However, my office gets calls from many agricultural and industrial businesses that are desperate, because they are trying to get foreign workers and it takes forever. By the time these businesses get the green light to bring the workers over, those workers have found jobs elsewhere and no longer want to come.

Do you believe that the timelines for processing files in the federal system are a problem?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Absolutely. That is what we are seeing in our industry. We recruit the workers, the businesses want to bring them over, but because the files get bogged down in Ottawa, the workers find other jobs.

Mr. Serge Buy: It's the same story in our industry. I saw statistics this morning talking about processing delays for 2.6 million applications at Immigration Canada. It seems that is the problem. I would say that there is a personnel issue with Immigration Canada. They can't do the work quickly anymore. I could give you similar examples of people who are offered jobs but unfortunately, other countries will give them immigrant status much more quickly.

I would, however, like to thank Transport Canada for signing bilateral agreements with different countries to recognize diplomas and certificates, which will allow workers to access the Canadian labour market more quickly. It's important, and we would like to see more of this.

• (1740)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: My next question is for all three witnesses. I don't know how much time I have left, Mr. Chair.

You spoke quite a bit about the aging workforce in the marine sector as well as the trucking sector. Other witnesses from the trucking sector have also provided testimony. Have you thought of ways that would encourage workers to stay on the job longer? That could also be part of the solution. The Bloc Québécois has proposed tax credits for experienced workers, but there are most certainly other good incentives.

I would like to hear your thoughts, starting with Mr. Corey, because he hasn't spoken yet.

[English]

Mr. John Corey: Certainly. I think it is apparent that people are working longer, and that is a good thing. We should take advantage of that. There is one area where I find an incongruity: that as we digitize the environment people work in, there's a potential that younger workers are much better suited for those kinds of technological changes. Older workers can learn new tricks, but I'm not sure that's a place we should be focusing our energies.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have 15 seconds.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Anyone else?

Mr. Serge Buy: We have workers who are getting on in years. The chief engineer of one of our operators is over 73 years old. How much longer can we ask them to stay on? I don't know, it's hard to say.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Mr. Masse, the floor is yours. You have six minutes, unless Mr. Bachrach has returned.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Thank you. Yes, he's just behind me, but he's going to let you be subjected to me for the first round here. You can get him back later.

Thanks for having me, Mr. Chair. It's good to be back here.

To our witnesses, actually, on the international trade committee we are studying the container issue and shortages too, so maybe we'll forward some information that might be helpful for the committee.

Mr. Badawey has done some really good work on the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group initiative. We're carving out a special spot for the Great Lakes, so we now focus on other political contacts, NGOs and businesses on the Great Lakes side. It was an initiative that he started. It has formalized and created another level of opportunity.

I'm wondering what you're hearing from American counterparts, and whether or not a similar strategy with labour might be a way to go if they're suffering the same kinds of pains we are, since many of our markets are integrated. In ridings like mine and Mr. Lewis's here, we have about 10,000 trucks per day that go through our communities. He probably actually gets more, because they go back and forth within his riding even more, even though I have the border.

Do you have any thoughts on reaching out to our American and perhaps even Mexican counterparts about some of the labour shortages that we have, as a unified approach to making sure that's in place?

Maybe we can start with Mr. Corey and go across the table.

Mr. John Corey: I think it was shown during the pandemic that in very short order the Canadian border can be crossed by either side in an emergency. That was done specifically with the flooding and the break of the supply chain in British Columbia last year. It can be done quickly if they want to do it quickly.

I think that's an important thing, that we should have a better co-ordination between the two countries for any cross-border activity. That will increase the efficiency and take the stress off the driver shortage initially.

To your point, I think that having some kind of common market, where labour can be easily transferred from one jurisdiction to another, would be a very good idea, especially since we have other countries like Mexico and the United States that seem to have a lot more people who would be able to come and help Canadians with their labour shortage.

Mr. Brian Masse: That's great. I think of trucking in Windsor here. I don't really care whether it's a Canadian or an American delivering it. If we're all integrated, it could be a Mexican delivering it. We want the jobs here, but if we're short, then we have to keep the plants running.

I'll go over to the Chamber of Marine Commerce.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I would say that the Americans are investing heavily in their port infrastructure and in their training as well. I know there are ships that are run by cadets in the United States. Of course, the scale is different, but still, they're not shy about investing in their future workforce by spending on it so that they can have a future and they can have seafarers who man their ships. Similarly to the Canadian model, it's American seafarers who man American ships, so they invest in their training. The results are there. They're manned by American seafarers.

• (1745)

Mr. Brian Masse: Okay. I will follow up quickly before I go to Mr. Corey. I have the HMCS *Hunter* in my riding. It's a naval operation where we have cadets and so forth. Do you actually recruit or...? I've never seen that going on in our community. We're a port city. I'm wondering whether there are attempts to recruit out of our military operations as well. Some of the positions are part-time, too. They're reservists. I'm wondering if you could access that. Should we think about that as well?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I would start by saying that the information on the industry is scarce. The NOCs haven't been updated in ages, the national classification system for occupation. It's very hard for me to tell you, for example, how many engineers there are, and all the positions. Since they haven't been updated, it's very hard to track the labour pool right now. It's even harder to track that labour pool based on where they were before.

Mr. Brian Masse: Okay, that's interesting to follow.

Quickly, I'll go over to Mr. Corey.

You mentioned a really good point with regard to conditions of work. There was a great rail report that came out that talked about the culture of intimidation and fear from CN and CP upon workers when they moved to the safety management system.

What can we do for our trucking, especially for independent truckers? I have a lot in my community. Some of them don't have benefits. They don't have a number of different supports that way. They're also being leveraged to fund their own thing. Are there things that we can do, as more of a co-operative or some type of other system, to help link them somehow to offset some of their costs? Some of the financing is unbelievable. Then, they don't get the benefits, as an independent person.

Mr. John Corey: Right. The trucking industry is extremely fragmented. There are many owner-operators, and there are big companies, too. The industry, as I mentioned, has about 70% turnover. We have one member whose turnover is 0.77%. We asked them what they are doing. They pay hourly wages so there's no pressure on having to deliver "or else". They have benefits. They have new trucks; they turn over their trucks every three years so they're using good equipment. They are moving towards technology with the data log. They are providing a good workplace for their employees, and people stay. They also have a mentoring program.

These are the kinds of things that we have to make available to people who want to get into an industry or a career. It costs money. You need to have programs where people can do it. Making a quick buck is great for today, but it's not going to help us going forward. I think there needs to be...and there is. On the provincial level, there are training programs for truckers, but obviously we need more.

Mr. Brian Masse: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, is that all my time?

The Chair: You have 20 seconds left, and I'll be glad to take it back.

Mr. Brian Masse: I'll cede that to Mr. Lewis.

I thank the committee for your indulgence and wish you all the best. Thank you to the witnesses.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Masse, for joining us today.

Next we have Mr. Lewis.

You have five minutes and 20 seconds. The floor is yours.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and of course thank you to my colleague. I'll use up all 20 seconds and say thank you to Mr. Masse.

This is a really good study. Am I ever happy to be on this committee now.

I have just a few initial thoughts.

In my riding of Essex, I'm surrounded by Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River and Lake Erie. We have ferries. We have barges. We have the HMCS *Hunter*, as Mr. Masse mentioned. We have police boats.

The first thing I would say is.... I already brought this up to St. Clair College. I floated this about two months ago and they're very

much on board. I think it would be a great idea to start a training centre in the area. It's centralized to Canada. We can put people on the ferries. We can put them on the freighters. We have ADM, which ships grain across to the United States. They can learn to navigate. We have the military.

That's just a point of interest. I've already opened up those talks.

I guess my question would be for Mr. Morel-Laforce. Where are those two training centres, specifically?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The one that submitted an application to ESDC—and they're waiting—is the Institut maritime du Québec in Rimouski, along the St. Lawrence. You have Georgian College as well, in Ontario. These are the two main ones in the east, I would say.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you very much, sir.

I'm fortunate enough to have a family cottage on Manitoulin Island. The Chi-Cheemaun ferry takes our family over there every year. Sometimes twice a year, if you're not in politics, I suppose.

I went over there right after the House rose. The cooks and the deckhands were all speaking English, but they sounded a lot like they were from Newfoundland, so I got inquisitive. I started asking questions and came to find out that nearly 75% of the folks on the Chi-Cheemaun actually came in from Newfoundland.

Of course, I went to Minister O'Regan and asked him if he realized I was stealing his people. He said he didn't know what I meant. His office apparently overlooks the port in St. John's. To make a long story short, my point is that we're stealing from Peter to pay Paul. If we're taking them from Newfoundland, that's fantastic. Folks love them to death, but that's not getting the job done.

I guess I'll take it one step further. Last week I was in Taiwan and got a chance to visit the Taipei port. This port is so incredibly digitalized. At the end of the day, it goes like this: You get a ship of 24,000 sea containers being off-loaded, one every 30 minutes, which is remarkable in and of itself. In speaking to the CEOs of the port, I know they took their labour force from somewhere around 41 people per shift down to 18. Wow. However, they also said that they hired more people because they're so modernized at their ports that they had to hire way more truck drivers. I'm going to suggest it's probably easier to get truck drivers than it is for folks to use booms and all those types of things.

Just with regard to the ports—and I'm saying this because of the labour side of things—do you have any idea with regard to our ports on the east coast or the west coast if that's something we're actively going after? Is there something the government can do to help that out?

• (1750)

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Do you mean in regard to investment for new technologies?

Mr. Chris Lewis: That's right.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I know for sure that the Port of Montreal is heavily investing in new technology. It's expanding its container terminal, for instance.

It's something that ports are aware of, but they do have limits in terms of their investment capacity. That's because of the act that governs their operation. It is due for review, and we're anxiously waiting for the government to table amendments to it. We're hopeful that it will allow ports to invest more in new technology so they can be like the Taipei port.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, how much time is left, sir?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Excellent, thank you.

I'll just finish it off with one question. I don't know whom I should address this to.

I know there was an issue between our western ports and our eastern ports with regard to our labour force. It's the number of hours worked compared to the hours they have off. I believe the western ports have more time off than the eastern ports, but it doesn't necessarily affect each one.

I'm wondering if it would be beneficial to all of our shipping industry, specifically to our labour folks, to have one standard for Canada.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: To that I would say that we would need some intervention, to an extent, to provide for labour to continue in the event of disruptions. That's something that's happened in the past. It affects the reputation of a port. Once a port goes through several labour issues, it can affect its international reputation. Shippers will try to avoid it. They want to avoid disruption.

I'm not aware of the difference between west and east, but for sure some federal intervention, just to help mediate any problems on the labour side, would be gladly appreciated by members, yes.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lewis.

Next we have Ms. Koutrakis.

Ms. Koutrakis, the floor is yours for five minutes.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, colleagues, I'd like to welcome once again our new members on the transport committee. I know I can speak for all of us around the table and say that we very much look forward to working with you.

I also want to say thank you very much to our witnesses for appearing before us this afternoon.

I want to ask each one of you—briefly, if we can—what your thoughts are on the recently released report by the supply chain task force. More specifically, I'm looking for which recommendations you think are most important, which ones you think they got wrong, if any, and how we can do better.

Mr. John Corey: I can go first.

I don't think they got any of them wrong. I think there are a lot of good ideas in there. The question is, can they all be implemented? Probably not.

One that I personally like, although it doesn't have much to do with the labour issue, is strengthening the Canada Transportation Act to give it more power, potentially similar to powers that the STB has in the United States, where they can make quick decisions that are very timely and get things rolling.

I also like the extended interswitching, because I'm a rail nerd. I think that will afford shippers more options to move their goods. It will also move inland ports and staging grounds away from those interchanges, further out, but still allow them to be able to take advantage of interswitching rates.

I think the idea of having a supply chain czar, someone who can coordinate, is a very good idea. How that will actually be done is still a bit of a mystery, but I think it's a good idea and it may be worth pursuing.

• (1755)

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I'll definitely second that. Having a secretariat that would work with several departments that are involved in the supply chain and in solving issues as they come is a great idea. It needs to be provided resources to take place. That's the key part. We need to follow up on the recommendations of the task force. They went out and listened to the industry, and it's reflective of that. I'm hearing lots of positive feedback about it. The next step is to actually implement it.

On the labour side, during the summit there was a specialized program launched through ESDC, on which we are still awaiting announcements. What I hear is that there's a billion dollars' worth of ask and only \$300 million available for it. That shows that there's a lack of investment on the labour side from the federal government. We should definitely increase it so that we don't run out of specialized workers to man ships in Canada.

Mr. Serge Buy: The report was good, with lots of great recommendations, but we're keen on seeing the actions coming out of that rather than just the report. Having a czar and a secretariat is also great. We're having issues manning other departments right now, so I don't know about creating a big bureaucracy on top of everything. I don't know that the solution to everything is to create a new secretariat and everything, so I'm a little bit careful on this.

The main thing right now is action. I look forward to the implementation of some of the recommendations.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Thank you.

Moving over to the marine sector, Monsieur Morel-Laforce and Monsieur Buy, are there aspects of labour shortages in the marine transport sector that are particularly unique as compared with other modes?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: It's about being known by the general population, I think. Recent surveys by SODES in Quebec showed that about 40% of the population is unaware of the sector completely. If you translate that to young Canadians, or Canadians looking for a second career, they're mostly in that category. They don't know that the sector has great offerings for them or that it offers the possibility of a rapidly good-paying job. They're just unaware of the sector.

Building that awareness is key to building the pipeline of workers for the industry.

Mr. Serge Buy: The awareness is one thing. Every industry, right now, is competing for workers. If we take more workers from the Canadian population, we're going to limit it for another industry.

The issue is immigration. Are we unique on that point? There's a certain uniqueness to the marine sector, in terms of our ability to train at a training institution, and for those trainees to remain in Canada. There is the ability to do hybrid training, as well. These are fixes that can be done quickly by this government. These are not long, drawn-out studies or work that needs to be done.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Koutrakis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A little while ago, I asked Mr. Corey and Mr. Buy to talk about retaining experienced workers. Mr. Morel-Laforce, perhaps you have something to say on the issue, but I would ask you to go even further.

For example, Mr. Buy spoke about the fact that there were workers who were 70 years old and that you couldn't keep them on forever. And yet people my age and some of my friends are starting to see our parents retire, when in fact most of them could probably work another five to 10 years. They often say that they have the impression that they are working to pay taxes and that they would also like to enjoy a better quality of life.

Wouldn't there be ways to incentivize them to stay in their jobs for a longer period?

• (1800)

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I think the industry would look favourably upon measures that would encourage people who are getting close to retirement or who are already past the age of retirement to carry on.

We certainly have an aging workforce. Often, the more workers are specialized, the older they are; they are the very backbones of the crews. Indeed, if tax measures convinced them to stay in place, we would be in favour.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: My next question is for you, but perhaps also for Mr. Buy.

In terms of automation and new technology that could be used, are there things that could be done to reduce labour requirements? I know you can't meet every requirement with this type of tool, but I was wondering if you had any ideas?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Our industry is at the forefront of automation. The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, for example, no longer moors ships with people, but rather with suction cups. This has helped the corporation to contend with departing workers. There are machines that are making up for the lack of personnel, but at the same time, we have to train the workers that are using the machines. This requires recruiting and training new employees.

The industry is certainly using automation, and it will seize any opportunity that presents itself. However, we still have to find workers that will operate the machines.

Mr. Serge Buy: There is indeed new technology. A ship that was built 40 years ago in no way resembles the ships that we have today. However, this new technology that would allow us to reduce the number of crew members is also regulated by Transport Canada, and the regulations do not always keep up with current technology. We have to update the technology and the regulations.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Barsalou-Duval. I know that time flies by.

[*English*]

Next, we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to the committee for welcoming my colleague Mr. Masse for a round of questions.

It's great to hear from all the witnesses today.

It's good to see you again, Mr. Buy. Obviously, ferries are of great interest in northwest B.C., so perhaps I'll address my questions to you for a couple of minutes.

I'm curious about salaries in your sector. We heard from the trucking industry, at a previous meeting, that salaries in the trucking industry have gone up, if I recall, by 15% to 20% in the past two years—some pretty staggering numbers. Have salaries shown similar increases in the ferry industry?

Mr. Serge Buy: I wouldn't say it's to that extent, but they are increasing.

I would say we're competitive. I was talking to Transport Canada a few days ago. They mentioned that we were poaching some of their candidates, because we were offering very good salaries. I would say, perhaps, that we are already there and don't have catching up to do versus other sectors. We are already offering extremely good salaries. The main reason for this is that we're competing internationally, as well.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr Buy, following up on that, earlier you had some comments that I think might have raised some eyebrows, saying that raising salaries may attract a few people but others will raise their salaries in this endless race to poach each other's employees and no one will benefit from that.

One could suggest that the employees benefit from higher salaries. Is raising salaries to remain competitive in the industry not a way to increase retention of existing employees? If there are others in the shipping industry or other transportation industries who are coming for your employees, how do you address that?

Mr. Serge Buy: I understand. If we raise salaries in the ferry sector, those employees are going to come from another sector. They may come from the shipping sector, so suddenly the shipping sector is going to have a crash or is going to be dealing with something else. We are actually competing with Transport Canada and the Coast Guard right now, and the cruise ships, on some salaries.

The comment was meant to say that at some point we're competing for the same group of people. Going up on salaries is great on all sides—and, absolutely, the employees always benefit from increased salaries—but it has to be viable, and it has to be a solution that ensures that all the sectors can continue.

• (1805)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Next we have Mr. Muys.

Mr. Muys, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Mr. Dan Muys: Thank you to all the witnesses, and thank you for providing recommendations. I note that the brief the Canadian Ferry Association sent has not only recommendations but detailed recommendations. That will be helpful as we consider our report.

I want to go back to the whole immigration issue and sourcing workers from foreign places, because you mentioned here a shortage of 19,000 workers in the next decade in the marine sector. We've heard testimony already about a shortage of 28,000—and growing—truckers in Canada at the moment. So, we have these shortages, and we've heard repeatedly over the course of now the third meeting on this study that immigration is a potential solution or an important solution.

Of course, we agree with that. That has always been the case in Canada, but my concern is that there are no quick fixes. You've mentioned the fact that it's a two-year wait. There's a two-year delay. I'm sure you're hearing that from members of your organizations and from people you're dealing with.

You mentioned 2.6 million cases. I heard 2.7 million cases. We can split the difference; that's fine. However, we know that the sys-

tem is broken. We know that with this government a lot of things are broken. We saw that with passports, with the airport mess, etc.

How much trouble are we in if we have to wait two years?

Mr. Serge Buy: In the ferry sector, we're in trouble. We're often one person away from tying the ship and not enabling passengers and goods to come through.

Last year, when the vaccine mandates came, some employees refused to work. We tied a number of ferries down. Now that it's removed, some employees chose to come back to work; others didn't choose to come back to work. We're in trouble on that. Attracting people through immigration is key, but you're correct that we need to fix some major issues there.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: You have plenty of industries in this country that rely on marine shipping of bulk cargo. I mean, take the iron ore that goes through Hamilton to be made into car parts. Take the grain farmers from the west who are relying on it for their exports. In the event that this shipping stops because there are no seafarers to man these ships, you will see a decrease in your exports, and you will see a decrease in the productivity of your major industries, absolutely.

Mr. Dan Muys: Is it possible to quantify it over the course of the short term? Long-term, there have been recommendations that you've all made. Obviously, there can be fixes put into place, but that's not going to happen tomorrow. A couple of years down the road, we are going from 19,000 to what? We are 28,000 truck drivers short; that is what we heard at the last meeting. What are we looking at two to five years down the road? Do you have any sense of that?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: I think there are solutions out there, and they are being implemented. I think the Ukrainian example is one that works very well. I know from my members that we have 20 to 30 seafarers who came this year because Transport Canada basically sealed a deal with Ukraine on recognizing their credentials. Now seafarers from Ukraine are welcome to work on Canadian ships. That's two ships right there that can be manned. If that program continues and more of this credential recognition is done with other countries, there is definitely a way to welcome seafarers.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Buy has a comment.

Can you quantify that, Mr. Buy?

Mr. Serge Buy: I can't quantify it, but I'd like to continue on the point.

The agreement with Ukraine was signed. There is an agreement with France, Norway, Australia and Georgia, and the Canadian government is looking at signing an agreement with Brunei and then with the Philippines. The agreement with the Philippines will open a whole bunch of doors that will be very helpful for Canada. An agreement with India, which is also looked at and possibly is in the list of countries, would be the most beneficial for us, right after the one with the Philippines.

We talk about negatives. There are positives as well, and we need to explore them.

• (1810)

Mr. Dan Muys: That's fair enough.

My time is probably winding down.

Mr. Corey, you referenced making trucking a skilled trade, as it is in Europe. Maybe you could speak a bit more to that and elaborate more on the European example or other jurisdictions that have best practices around that. It might be instructive for us.

The Chair: Could we have a short response, please?

Mr. John Corey: As I said, it's almost a default career now. People default to trucking. It should be shown as a true vocation that is skilled, that requires a lot of responsibility, that pays very well and is a good environment to work in. Hopefully, that will attract more people to that industry.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Muys.

Mr. Chahal, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us today.

Mr. Corey, I'll start with you. Who are the truck drivers who are entering the industry today? Who are they? Where are they coming from?

Mr. John Corey: Well, in speaking to some of my members, there aren't many entering the industry today, so that is the problem. The average age is just getting older and older. It's a sort of lifestyle issue. People don't want to be on the road. They don't want to be away from their families. They'd rather stay close.

There are large groups of individuals who are involved in trucking and are coming from other countries, and that is good, because they obviously see this as an opportunity, but I think part of the problem is that we don't have any infill at the bottom as the older drivers are leaving at the top.

Mr. George Chahal: I want to finish off where Mr. Muys left off, on making trucking a skilled trade. What are some specifics that we have to do to make it a skilled trade like other countries do? Is it a Red Seal program? We talked about the opportunity for an internship type of program, where you can work with an experienced driver. What does that look like specifically?

Mr. John Corey: Some of those things exactly.... Right now it would probably cost you about \$10,000 to get the training required to get your licence to drive a big rig. There needs to be some acceptance that this is an important job. We saw that during the pandemic. If truck drivers hadn't continued operating, we would have been in a jackpot. There needs to be some recognition that this is an important job in society.

As I said, as it becomes more technologically bent, that may attract more people: younger people who are familiar with technology and want to embrace that. We're going to have things like platooning trucks, where you have five trucks with one driver. On autonomous trucking, I think that is way in the future.

Those are the kinds of things that would make this a bit of a sexier industry compared to what it is today, and I think that's what needs to happen to attract people.

Mr. George Chahal: I'm going to go to a different line of questioning, and I want to hear from everybody. I'll tell you a bit about where this is coming from.

I represent a very diverse community in northeast Calgary, with rail, an airport and a lot of newcomers, a lot of them working in the trucking industry. They work in distribution and warehousing. Also, we have a very vibrant inland port, which is going to help with some of the supply chain challenges on the west coast, particularly as Prince Rupert grows.

I hear all the time from the industry that the government needs to do something with labour. I hear this all the time, but my question for you is, what is your organization doing to connect with labour, with diverse communities?

I will start with you, Mr. Buy.

Mr. Serge Buy: Thank you for that question. It's a great question.

We've actually looked at a number of solutions in the past. We can talk about indigenous communities also. A number of our members have programs to attract indigenous people to the sector.

For newcomers as well, a lot of work has been done with newcomers in making sure that when they're coming—because a lot of our ferries operate in remote communities—we are welcoming them in those communities. It is a challenge, on occasion, for people to establish in something that is completely remote.

We are doing a lot of work. Can more be done? Absolutely, more can always be done, but I can assure you that there is a lot of work being done by our members.

Mr. George Chahal: To follow up, is your organization going out to those communities? Are you offering training or incentives, or are you looking at the government to do that for you?

Mr. Serge Buy: You'll never hear me saying that the government is a solution to everything. Our members are doing their part, and need to do their part. It's too easy to say the government is responsible for everything.

Our members are doing their part and making sure that people are welcome and people are trained. They are doing training. When we ask the government to do things, it's related to regulations and opening up some doors for us.

We are working with the communities. We are looking at doing a number of things. We are welcoming Ukrainian immigrants—refugees, at this point—and I'm probably going to go to the Philippines to attract new people in the near future.

There is a lot of work we are doing, specifically.

• (1815)

Mr. George Chahal: I want to give 15 seconds to each of you, because that's all I have left.

Go ahead, Mr. Morel-Laforce.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The Canadian Marine Industry Foundation is exactly that. It's dedicated to spreading the good word about the industry and doing outreach to indigenous communities and to people who are not necessarily represented in the industry. The industry is very much active in its outreach.

However, funding would be greatly appreciated to do that, through ESDC programming or extended EI benefits for training in seafaring, for sure.

Mr. John Corey: My members are essentially shippers, so they would welcome any additional employees they could hire. The ability to do that.... The red tape around that could be reduced, which would facilitate that for everybody.

Mr. George Chahal: Thank you so much.

Come to Calgary Skyview and I'll bring workers to work for you, as long as you pay them well.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Chahal. I appreciate that.

Next, we have Mr. Strahl.

The floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to go directly to driver compensation and drill down into that area.

I grew up in a blue-collar town in Chilliwack and knew numerous people who raised families by driving long-haul trucks. Until a few years back, that is what they did to put food on the table. They lived a comfortable lifestyle.

I've heard stories since then about the rates for the routes that they used to cover, going back 20 years, and companies undercutting what had been the going rate for a number of years. They were clearly not paying the going rate or the previous prevailing wage to their drivers.

I want to talk a bit about mileage rates versus hourly rates, and what you're seeing. Are certain companies—some bad actors—taking advantage of vulnerable people and not paying a fair wage—or even minimum wage, it would seem—in some of these cases?

If we're going to ask companies to go to an hourly wage or if we believe that it would help address the driver shortage, what are we doing to alleviate the dwell times or the turnaround time problems at inland ports?

I talked to one of my colleagues, who said that he had a constituent reach out to him. He said he used to be able to turn a truck 1.8 times a day and now he's lucky if he can turn it once. It's easy to say he should pay an hourly wage, but if his driver is not moving product because things are jammed up at the inland ports or at the intermodal yards and so on, how is he going to do that?

I want to talk a bit about your concerns about the wide variance in wages. I'll go to Mr. Corey first. Are people cheating the system? Is there any policing happening for that? If so, what is it? Maybe some others can weigh in on the problems with port wait times,

etc., that are going to make it more difficult to change the compensation model.

Mr. John Corey: Thank you for that question.

One problem with this is that it's not simple. In trucking, we're talking about a multi-jurisdictional industry. Each province has its own regulations and rules, and it's very hard to coordinate them all at the same time to have an even industry across the country.

Speaking from what I know, my members are saying that hourly wages make the job much more appealing. However—and your point is well taken—if you're sitting at a truck, dwelling for seven hours, waiting to pick up a container, that's a lot of money wasted.

Again, this issue is not single-faceted. Multiple players will have to be affected by this. What causes that dwell time? It means that maybe it's not as efficient at the intermodal yard. Maybe it's the railway that's having issues, and the trucker will end up paying for it.

Again, that's why having someone coordinating the supply chain to make sure we don't waste money on additional infrastructure or additional things, when we can use the assets we currently have more effectively, is better for everyone.

I don't have a simple answer for you, but I think we have to look at all aspects of the situation, and there's a ripple effect right through the system.

• (1820)

Mr. Mark Strahl: I guess it becomes less attractive. It's a chicken-and-egg thing. Is there a problem with the dwelling issue because there are not enough drivers, and are there not enough drivers because there's not adequate compensation to make it a desirable job? Multiple committees are studying this. This committee studied it. I think there are problems up and down the chain.

I don't know how much time I have left, but someone else wanted to weigh in on that.

The Chair: You have 20 seconds, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I don't know if Mr. Morel-Laforce wants to comment.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: On the dwelling time at ports, I think we talked about data sharing and automation. There are definitely things that can be done. Port members have been working hard at lining up trucks with cargo more quickly. Investment in new technologies can definitely help in reducing wait times for truckers at ports.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Morel-Laforce.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Next we have Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Mr. Iacono, you have five minutes.

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being with us here this evening.

My first question is for Mr. Morel-Laforce.

Which areas in the marine transportation sector are suffering the most from a shortage of workers?

And for what reasons?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Recruitment for every position on the ships is critical, and that's from the cook to your ordinary seaman, not to mention the more specialized trades. All job categories are currently in demand. No one has a surfeit of workers.

It can take up to five months to train a seaman and cost up to \$50,000. A good number of the training centres are in the United States. Employers incur costs to simply have a cook that can feed their crews, for example.

When you're talking about the more specialized trades, training takes more time. To train a ship captain, you need six to eight years.

The shortages are everywhere. We were talking earlier about sectors poaching employees from one another. That's similar to what is going on a ship in all job categories.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: At the beginning of your answer, you said that it was the case for all job categories.

We are now coming to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. But what was the situation in terms of labour shortages before 2019?

Three or four years ago, what did you do to try to fix the problem if it already existed? Did the problem only crop up after the pandemic?

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: Our members had to abide by the regulations in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This period was more difficult for sailors on board ships, because they couldn't go offshore when their vessels were docked. A large proportion of our workers were quickly vaccinated and followed protocols. In that respect, our national supply chain was not affected.

The industry is really trying to promote itself. The Imagine Marine program is working on promoting the industry and is offering opportunities to the young and less young who are looking for a career. Salaries start at \$60,000. You can earn up to \$200,000 in the marine sector.

The industry is also trying to adapt to the situation. For example, rotation times between sea and shore are shorter. However, the current federal regulations are hindering us quite a bit.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: How are new technology and automation changing the labour situation?

I was in Taiwan last week. From what I learned over there, businesses used to need 40 employees per shift. Since making the transition towards new technology, they only need 18 employees per shift. That has had a huge impact.

What do you say to that?

• (1825)

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The number of seamen on board has already been reduced over the past few years. We are already

using technology. What improvements need to be made would come from amending the regulations so that they are as up to date as the technology on board the ships. What's more, you would certainly need to conduct better industry consultations when the time comes to put regulations in place.

For example, Employment and Social Development Canada brought in new regulations recently that aren't consistent with those of Transport Canada. The industry is grappling with two sets of regulations that pertain to seamen and that don't say the same thing. When we ask for clarification, neither of the two departments want to say which set of regulations takes precedence in certain fields. That increases costs to the industry and creates problems, and we aren't really seeing any concrete results.

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you, that's great.

My next question is for Mr. Corey and Mr. Buy.

In what measure are the various orders of government in Canada working together to help fix labour shortages? Is there a coordinated approach?

[English]

Mr. John Corey: I would say that, at this time, there's not much coordination, which is at the root of the problem. I think there needs to be more coordination throughout all levels of government to address this issue.

Thank you.

Mr. Serge Buy: Our sector is federally regulated, sir. This comes back to the federal government and federal regulations.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono: Thank you.

My next question...

[English]

The Chair: Unfortunately, that is the end of your time, Mr. Iacono.

[Translation]

Thank you.

Mr. Barsalou-Duval, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for Mr. Corey, because earlier I was talking about adopting new technology. This is related to what Mr. Iacono was saying.

In the sectors that you represent, can automation and new technology be part of the solution, too? Do you have any examples to give us?

[English]

Mr. John Corey: I think that is part of the answer. Technology, as the example given.... Reducing the number of people on board a ship through the use of technology is helpful. I was recently at a member's facility where they now have robots stuffing and packing pallets. That takes the place of multiple people. In fact, unfortunately or fortunately, the robots do a better job of packing, because it's quicker and there are no breaks—they can work 24-7. There are some technologies that can help.

Having said that, the problem with labour, generally, is.... Just because fewer people are working in transportation, that doesn't mean there are fewer people working. There are other sectors where people can work. Technology, I think, is something that is inevitable; it's something we're going to deal with. It's not something that's going to change. I think embracing it is the way to go. Yes, it can help alleviate the number of employees required in transportation.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: I don't know how much time I have left. Sometimes I get my knuckles rapped.

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Right.

In that case, Mr. Buy, do you have anything to add to our discussion?

Mr. Serge Buy: The only thing I would add, is that there are solutions that could help improve the situation, especially when it comes to federal regulations. We could certainly sign international agreements. Some solutions have been requested and they wouldn't cost millions of dollars. If you look at our recommendations, you will see that some of them could be put into place quite quickly. That could give us breathing space for a while. It would be great if the committee looked at some of our recommendations and put them in place.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[English]

Next, we have Mr. Bachrach.

Mr. Bachrach, the floor is yours. You have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Corey, earlier you had some remarks about the rail sector and some of the retention challenges and concerns around conditions of work. In northwest B.C. there are hundreds of men and women who work on the trains. I talked to one gentleman recently who was relatively new to the industry, and he quit and moved to another sector because he was concerned for his safety. I also hear about the challenges of scheduling, the lack of fatigue management, and a whole host of other concerns. It's something this committee has done work on in the past year.

I'm wondering to what degree the safety culture in the rail sector and the safety performance of rail companies need to improve in order to retain and attract workers to that sector.

• (1830)

Mr. John Corey: Both Canadian railways, CN and CP, often tout their safety records, but in reality I think they could do a lot more to make it a safe workplace. Much of that burden is borne by those employees. As you point out, many employees who think the rail industry is a good place to work find out that maybe it's not the best place they want to work in.

Again, railways are driven by their operating ratios and meeting their quarterly numbers. That means "if we can save some money, let's do it", and it often means cutting the workforce to achieve that quickly. That's very short-sighted, and it has consequences going forward. One of them is the poor performance of the railway, but also the safety of the employees.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Are there regulations that the federal government could put in place to address those things?

Mr. John Corey: There probably are regulations already in place. The question is whether they are enforced.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachrach.

Next we go back to Dr. Lewis.

Dr. Lewis, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Thank you.

My question will be for Mr. Corey and Mr. Buy. You spoke about the labour shortage. There were similar shortages in the agricultural sector. That sector had serious problems with the ability to get their products to market and to get them on our tables. They came up with the seasonal agricultural worker program. Similarly, people who work shifts were unable to find reliable child care, and then the government came up with the live-in caregiver program. This program has the capacity for people to apply for permanent residency. That would attract really skilled people who probably ordinarily wouldn't go into that area, but afterwards sometimes they would even go on to become nurses and do things that enhance their lives and also our economy.

Do you project that a program similar to that could be put in place in order to induce strong candidates to come and work as truck drivers and in seafaring occupations? What would that look like?

Mr. John Corey: I'm not a labour expert, but I think if we do have a framework that can attract workers from other places that has the potential for them to have good-quality jobs, and not only for half a year but for the whole year, that would be extremely good. It would not be that difficult to do, because there are already people who want to come to Canada for various reasons. Having jobs available for them when they get here I think only enhances our stature as a place where people want to come.

Mr. Serge Buy: One of the key things that people look at when they come to Canada is that.... They've been trained in their own country, and they've done a lot of work to get that training, yet their credentials are not recognized. It's disappointing for them when they are training to international standards such as IMO standards and STCW standards, as well.

I think what we can do is look at the credential recognition on that. We are starting, as I mentioned, with bilateral agreements. We need to up our game on this and move faster on this. That will be a definite help, Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: If that program leads to permanent residency, what do you think would be a good number of years for those individuals to work to be completely trained so that they could really be good, strong contributing members for the long term? Would it be two years, one year?

• (1835)

Mr. John Corey: I would just say that whatever the requirements currently are for those industries, whether it's rail or trucking, they would obviously have to meet those requirements. There's often also a language issue involved, and I think that's a very important component of it.

Mr. Serge Buy: On our side, there's a bit less of a language issue. It does exist, but there is a bit less because some of the training is already done in English in other countries, or French in other countries as well, so it's a bit less on our side. For training, it depends. It can be one year to go up to the position that people want to be in.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: How much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have one minute and 20 seconds, Dr. Lewis.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: I'm going to yield that time. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lewis.

Finally tonight, we have Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers, you have five minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair

Thanks to our guests, and welcome to the committee.

I live on an island, and that's why I'm going to focus on the marine sector side. Mr. Lewis talked about how Newfoundlanders and Labradorians work on lake boats. That's been happening in our province for generations. Of course, the transportation mode in Newfoundland 60 to 80 years ago was primarily boats.

When I was a high school teacher, we implemented a program in grade 10 to bring the curriculum of the Marine Institute at Memorial University into the classroom in grade 10 to create awareness among high school students. It has generated dozens and dozens of students who have gone through the Marine Institute and are now working in offshore supply boats and different kinds of boats, fishery boats and all the rest.

I want to ask you this question, Mr. Buy. On the awareness side, do young people know that there are jobs available in this sector? What data do you have on this? How is the industry communicating with them? We did the programming in the high school, in Harbour

Breton where I taught school, to create that awareness. What has the industry done to create awareness of what types of jobs are available and how well-paying some of these jobs are?

Mr. Serge Buy: Ultimately, the operators themselves are promoting the jobs, and indeed I'm aware of a number of operators that are in schools promoting the programs and explaining the jobs. Imagine Marine, of the Canadian Marine Industry Foundation, is also doing a great job on that front. Our operators are in schools and are promoting this.

One of your colleagues asked me what we do ourselves. We are actually putting a scholarship in place to help young women who want to train in the marine sector. So there are a lot of activities that are done by operators, by the association and others on that front. However, you're correct. I would say it's not even just high school now. It's elementary school where we need to reach out to the students.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Mr. Morel-Laforce, go ahead.

Mr. Maguessa Morel-Laforce: The industry is getting more and more active in spreading the good word on that and in attracting people to the training facilities. However, these training facilities are in a tough spot where provinces see these seafaring careers as a federal obligation and they often tell them that it's up to the federal government to fund them. We're talking about funding for simulators, for top-of-the-art machinery so that students can train in up-to-date classrooms. The industry is looking for the federal government to step in because it's federally regulated and provinces have a tendency of looking at the federal government for funding these initiatives from schools.

The same can be said for supporting future seafarers to go through the curriculum and, once enrolled, to have similar benefits, like the Red Seal trades or other sectors of the economy that are supported by the federal government, to encourage the completion of the course, and their cadet years as well.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you very much.

I know the Marine Institute makes a tremendous contribution to the marine sector in Newfoundland and Labrador, and actually across the country.

Mr. Badawey wanted to ask another question, so I'm going to cede the rest of my time to my colleague, Mr. Badawey.

• (1840)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. I'll be quick.

Mr. Corey, I give you a lot of credit for looking forward and trying to modernize...“transportation specialists”, I'll call them. I want to go down that road, and I want to get a bit more granular on that.

We have people being trained to be truck drivers. Earlier I mentioned pilots, captains and train engineers. Do you see an opportunity to give more exposure or acceptance to those who don't simply want to be a truck driver or a captain or a pilot or an engineer? Do you see an opportunity to add more corporate value by introducing you, introducing the sector and introducing the rebranded “transportation specialist”, where they would not just drive a truck or fly a plane or captain a ship or be an engineer on a train, but in fact also be a data and logistics manager?

I think a perfect example of that is Dell computers. When they move their product around, they're eliminating warehousing. They're actually getting their product on the road before it even has a destination.

Do you see an opportunity there, once again, to add corporate value as well as attraction to those who may want to get into that business, more so than in what's available to each individual today?

Mr. John Corey: Let's face it, 10 years ago no one knew what a supply chain was, and now we're having committee meetings about it. It's very important now. But a supply chain is not just people sitting in a cab or on a train or on a boat. There is, as you point out, a whole layer with the digitalization of it and also the data component of it. I think there could be more done to attract people into that sector or into the supply chain business, whatever you may call it.

I think the data component of it is going to be huge. There was some discussion about data already. I think the ports are ahead of the game on that in collecting data. We need to get the railways in there. We need to get trucking in there. We need just-in-time data. Currently, the data that's collected is two years old before anyone sees it. Just-in-time data is what shippers need, and I think what operators need also. That's how you make good decisions, by knowing what's happening today and not what happened two years ago.

I think there's a lot of potential for those kinds of highly technical jobs in the supply chain industry.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Badawey. That takes into consideration the time that Dr. Lewis had ceded to Mr. Rogers.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our witnesses for being here this afternoon and for contributing to this very important study.

This concludes the questioning for today. Please feel free to leave at your convenience.

Colleagues, we'll now turn to committee business. We have one item on the agenda. It's an item that I had a chance to speak to many of you about at the last meeting. It's a motion that we adopted in the previous session to approve committee travel for the visiting of various ports across the country.

Given that we didn't have an opportunity to plan that out for the time between now and December 31, the clerk has advised me that we need to adopt another motion to resubmit that funding request so that we have an opportunity, should we wish to do so, to visit these ports in the winter session.

I'm asking colleagues for unanimous consent. Is there any objection to us resubmitting the request?

Yes, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Chair, just quickly, were you successful in having the Liaison Committee approve that? Do we need to modify it at all, or is it just a matter of changing dates?

The Chair: It's just a matter of changing dates, Mr. Strahl. We were successful in securing that funding.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Excuse me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: We have asked to resubmit the request to push back the committee meeting. We also have a request concerning shoreline erosion. Wouldn't it be better if we used this opportunity to resubmit it as well?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barsalou-Duval.

[*English*]

I'll turn that over to the clerk to get his guidance. Can we do both?

[*Translation*]

That's great.

We will submit both requests at the same time.

[*English*]

Yes, Mr. Badawey.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Thank you.

To add a bit more meat to the bone on this one, with respect to all the studies we've been doing—vis-à-vis the transportation logistics study and the supply chain study, and with the expectation that ports modernization may come to us, as well as the study we're doing right now with respect to labour shortages—these trips across the country and visiting these areas will add to the knowledge of the committee by seeing first-hand what we're dealing with.

I think what's most important is not only what we're dealing with today, but how we're going to deal with it in the future because, to some extent, it's archaic. If you live in a community like mine, which has transportation attached to it as a strength, it's very disheartening to see how archaic it is in comparison to when it's strengthened and the capacity builds.

It was mentioned that the St. Lawrence Seaway is only working at 50% capacity. There's a reason for that. As a committee, we have to see it, so that when we're moving with those strategies, we can put the meat to the bone on it. It will be wonderful if we can get out there to see it first-hand.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1845)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Badawey.

For the new members who recently joined the committee, we can ensure that the list of ports that were approved and highlighted is sent around to all of you.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I have one other question. We had a witness mention the port modernization. How are the timing and chronology working here? Are we going to get a report back, and then go back to have another look at ports? I understand the desire to get out and move around, and obviously ports will continue to be an issue.

That's a question for the parliamentary secretary or the government side. Do we have any indication of when that issue may be back in our lap? Can we time it perfectly, or are we going to take the risk that we're going to do this first and deal with it again later?

The Chair: First of all, thank you for the question, Mr. Strahl.

Before I turn it over to the parliamentary secretary, I want to point out that we can have discussions about whether or not we even do this and whether or not the timing works out in the future. This is to ensure that, should the committee decide to do this at some point and the timing works out for us on it, the funding will be there to be able to do it. This is not a commitment that we are going to do it.

I hope that answers the question.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Yes. That's good.

The Chair: Seeing no other comments or questions, are there any objections to the clerk resubmitting the request?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Seeing no other business, the meeting is adjourned. Have a wonderful evening, everyone.

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