



House of Commons
CANADA

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

HUMA • NUMBER 050 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, November 3, 2005

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Chair

Ms. Raymonde Folco

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• (1110)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)): We will now proceed with the orders of the day of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This is meeting number 50 and it is Thursday, November 3, 2005.

[English]

The orders of the day are, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), a study of the summer career placement program.

This morning we have the pleasure of having with us, from the Southern Labrador Development Association, Mr. Wayne Earle, employment counsellor for Employment Assistance Services.

First of all, let me welcome Mr. Earle.

Can you hear us well, Mr. Earle?

Mr. Wayne Earle (Employment Counsellor, Employment Assistance Services, Southern Labrador Development Association): Yes, I can.

The Chair: We can hear you very well, too.

Mr. Earle is actually on the telephone. We tried to get a videoconference, believe me. It didn't work out. I am learning this morning how huge a territory—not a territory, but *territoire* in the French sense—Labrador is.

Mr. Russell, you wanted to give us a bit of a geography lesson on Labrador, which would be very welcome.

This is the reason we will not be able to see Mr. Earle, but we'll certainly be able to hear him and hear his comments, and you'll be able to ask questions.

For a couple of seconds, I'll just give you the floor, Mr. Russell, to begin.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, Wayne.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Good morning, Todd.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: I'm just going to give them a map of Labrador, because I think the clerk has had quite a time getting a geography lesson without visiting Labrador, and she wants to come down. I'm going to distribute a map now—

The Chair: So does the chair.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: —to all of my colleagues on the committee, just to point out where you are, and the geographic enormity of Labrador.

I don't need one, but you and I can share one, Peter.

Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): That's right.

Can you hear me, Wayne?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Yes, I can.

Hon. Peter Adams: I just want to say that I lived for a number of years in Shefferville, which as you know is now a small community, and also Labrador City and Wabush there.

The Chair: It shows your age, Mr. Adams, when you mention Shefferville.

Hon. Peter Adams: It does. I think it was the community Brian Mulroney closed down.

I also have been up and down the coast a number of times, so I know where you are very well.

Mr. Wayne Earle: That's good.

The Chair: And the rest of us hope to come to see you one day very soon.

Okay, we'll really start seriously now.

Is that all right, Mr. Russell? Do you want to add something?

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: If you will look on your map just for a second, Wayne is in Forteau, the community on the southern extreme.

Look from Forteau up to Nain—Nain is my most northerly community, an Inuit community. From Nain down to Forteau, as the crow flies—straight—is somewhere in the vicinity of 1,400 kilometres. Then from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Labrador City, you're talking about 600 or more kilometres. That's by road.

It's an enormous geographical area. It has a population of about 28,000 people, comprised of Inuit, Innu, Métis, and non-aboriginal people. The aboriginal population is about 40% of the overall population of Labrador. This just gives you a sense. I'm stationed in Goose Bay. We call it the administrative centre or capital.

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

Even though you're not there for us to look at you, Mr. Earle, we can imagine you in Forteau. Now I know a lot more than I used to know about Labrador, and as I said to you a minute ago, I certainly hope to actually see it very soon.

Now we'll start our meeting.

Mr. Earle, you have five or six minutes, possibly seven, to make your presentation, after which the members of the committee will be asking you questions and making comments on your presentation.

Would you like to start now, please?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Okay. First of all, I want to thank you. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address the committee. It's the very first time I've had an opportunity to address a committee of Parliament. And I ask that you bear with me as I ensure that I follow all the guidelines, because this is new to me.

I especially want to thank my MP, Mr. Russell, for giving me this opportunity. I had a little thing written up here about where I came from too, so if you don't mind, I'll just read this.

I live on the southeast coast of Labrador, and you already went through that. I live in a small community that neighbours the community I work in. I work in Forteau. I live in what I call the beautiful community of L'Anse au Loup. In fact, it is the same community in which my good friend, our late MP Lawrence O'Brien, was born and raised. I want to mention that because it is exactly the same community and I grew up with Lawrence.

For the past 16 years, I've been employed here with the Employment Assistance Services as an employment counsellor. Much of my work is dealing directly with youth. We're a very rural area with, as Todd said, a mixture of aboriginals and non-aboriginals.

I'll give you an idea of where we are too. I'm about a half-hour plane ride to the nearest airport in Blanc Sablon, and another hour's plane ride from the nearest Service Canada Centre in Labrador. So that'll show you the enormity of distances and so on. Also you can imagine the diversity of my work, since I'm working in a one-person office so far away from a service centre or what used to be an HRDC office.

I just want to say that at first, since I've got six or seven minutes, especially because I was gearing this towards a maximum of three minutes.

• (1115)

The Chair: Mr. Earle, please don't feel in any way obliged to stretch it out. That's a maximum. Say what you have to say and the other stuff will come out in the questions and the comments from the members.

Mr. Wayne Earle: That's great.

The Chair: Let me just add, because you mentioned Mr. O'Brien's name, that Mr. O'Brien was someone whom we respected and liked very dearly, and we all regret his passing.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Thank you.

I'll start my presentation now.

In the five years prior to 2005, Labrador received in the vicinity of \$280,000 to \$290,000 per year for the summer career placements for

all of Labrador, this big geographical area that you see on the map. Even then, we felt that this wasn't sufficient, and in 2005 this was reduced by 38%, and was said to be based on the declining student population. As it stands right now, the 2006 budget looks to be in the vicinity of \$200,000. Now I would like to outline the reasons why those amounts of funding are insufficient for our students.

Most communities in Labrador do not have large industry to hire students using their own moneys. Since 1992, with the closure of the cod fishery, many of the seasonal and odd jobs in this area have been taken up by adults—meaning people who are not students—due to limited employment opportunities.

For example, when I was a student, I could come right out of school and into the boat with my father. I didn't need licences or certification. Now the fishery is limited, and licences and marine emergency duty certification are required, which are very difficult and expensive for students to acquire. Students are depending on small business and organizations to find a suitable and meaningful work experience. Rural communities are depending on this because there's no other way.

Often students from our area will remain in the larger centres during the summer to work, because it's becoming more difficult to find employment at home in the rural community. This will eventually encourage the student to continue staying away, thus helping create the brain drain of our youth. It's a trend that we certainly want to reverse.

Another problem we have with the limited funds from summer career placement is that most projects are very limited in duration. For example, most projects this past summer were at 30 to 35 hours per week for a duration of six weeks. This does not provide for a meaningful first work experience, nor does it lend much financial assistance to the youth. University students are normally finished in April and are out of school for 15 to 18 weeks each summer. A six-week work term does very little for the students. Weeks should be increased to a minimum of 12 weeks. As for the high school students and graduates, the work experience should be a minimum of eight weeks.

Also, if the funding was available, a great motivator would be a tuition voucher at the end of the project, depending on the number of weeks worked. We must consider that most of those jobs are at a minimum wage, which is currently \$6.25 an hour in this province. I believe a tuition voucher should be attached to every student placement over and above their minimum wage earnings.

The summer career placement documentation, the agreement in particular, is cumbersome. There is just as much documentation and paperwork required for an \$800 agreement as there is for a \$20,000 project. This is as cumbersome, I believe, for the sponsor as it is for Service Canada. I normally, here at my office, receive several calls each year from the sponsors to help them decipher all the information that they're required to know. A more straightforward form or agreement should be put in place for small summer career placement projects.

Criteria should be loosened so that students who decide to do online courses in the summer should be eligible to work on summer career placement employment. This cuts back on expenses and allows the students to learn how to become disciplined in taking educational courses while still working.

● (1120)

In closing, I'm saying we must be open-minded to rural areas of our country to ensure that government does its part to assist students financially and, at the same time, give them the best possible opportunity to get an excellent first work experience while living in their own rural communities. We must find ways to attract our youth to come home, to learn at home, to earn money at home and to see rural Canada for what it really is, the number one place to live, work and eventually, hopefully, raise their families.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Earle. Certainly, I would like to say that your remarks are very compatible with some of the remarks we've heard from other groups throughout Canada.

I will now open the floor to members of the committee. Let me first explain how the system works.

The very first person who will be asking questions will be Mr. Devolin of the Conservative Party, then it will be Madame Bonsant from the Bloc Québécois, who will be followed by Mr. Tony Martin, an NDP member, and finally, a gentleman I think you know well, Mr. Todd Russell from the Liberals. So that's the order in which the questions will be asked.

Mr. Devolin.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair. It's Paul Forseth here.

Indeed, we're going to have Mr. Devolin ask questions, but before we do so we're going to flip it over to Mr. Russell and he will go first, at our request. It's his constituent and we would like him to proceed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and Mr. Forseth. I really appreciate it.

Wayne, that was an excellent presentation, and I believe it sums up very succinctly the situation that exists in Labrador. I think you've also outlined the importance of these positions, particularly for our young people, and the impact that it has on our communities, as well as the contribution that it provides to our communities.

In saying that, I think you've also come forward with at least one new idea that hasn't been put to this committee before, and that is the idea of tuition vouchers. Perhaps you could maybe speak to that a little more, about the benefit you see with that. I think it's an innovative idea. It's something we haven't looked at in the committee and is something we'll probably want to assess more fully—how we could go about that.

As well, you talked about the paperwork and how burdensome that is. That's been raised by some people before. Your suggestion was to streamline it or to make it simpler, not only for the student but for the sponsor. I think it's something we're going to take under consideration.

I would like you to give a couple of examples, because your area was one of the hardest hit by the cuts this year, because of the new database that was used in terms of assessing how many students and then, of course, on a per capita basis how much money we got. What impact might that have had on some of the programs in your particular area?

There are probably two or three questions in there.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Okay. The first one I'll talk about, Todd, is the tuition voucher.

I believe that in a lot of cases there are many students who haven't determined whether or not they're going on to post-secondary education. Some students, unfortunately, spend all the money they make during the summer months. The voucher at the end would be, to me, a motivator and an encouragement.

I'll give you an example. If two students work together, each student is entitled to an \$800 voucher at the end, if they go on to post-secondary education. So one student will look at the other and say, "Well, I'm going to have to go to post-secondary education too, because if I don't, this \$800 or \$600 or \$500 that you're going to get, I'm not going to get". In other cases where, unfortunately, kids spend their money, they can't spend the tuition voucher. It almost gives them a licence, in another way of speaking, to go on and attend university or attend post-secondary training.

It could be the thing that makes the difference between their going on to post-secondary education or continuing post-secondary education, as opposed to staying home. That's under the tuition voucher.

On the cutbacks and the impact they've had for us, Mr. Russell knows quite well about the way things are going in the fishery and the downturn in different species in the fishery in our small communities. In the past, for example, a lot of the processing plants in the summer hired students to work. The past couple of summers they have not been hiring students because there are so many other people living in our communities, raising families and so on, who depend on that little bit of work at the fish plants, so the students are not getting the same opportunity they had in the past.

I've seen students this year who have made decisions not to go on to post-secondary education because they simply didn't make any money. It's a terrible impact, really, and for those who did work, with the shorter number of weeks and so on, several students talked about how difficult it was going to be this year to go back to school. So it had quite an impact, really.

● (1125)

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Wayne, I have a further question. What's the price of gas now?

Mr. Wayne Earle: The price of gas right now, I think, is \$1.13. That was the last time I was at the pumps, only a couple of days ago. I think it's still there. It went up as high as \$1.60—something in some places along the coast a few weeks ago.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: I'm asking that question because the cost to a student in Labrador in terms of travel, even though we don't have a lot of roads...what's the average price for a student going to and from university, say, from Forteau to St. John's, which is the biggest hub? What's the price of a ticket?

Mr. Wayne Earle: I think a plane ticket return, probably paid a week in advance, would be about \$500. To Corner Brook a lot of people drive, but they have to take a ferry to get to Corner Brook and post-secondary....

That's another situation you've brought up, Todd. Every person who does post-secondary education here has to leave the coast to go to St. John's, Corner Brook, Goose Bay, wherever, and in most cases it's by airplane. In those six-week programs or projects, for an example, a student is only basically getting enough to pay their transportation to and from the school.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: That's exactly the point I raise when we talk about the price of gas at the pumps or the airline tickets. I think it only goes to show the exacerbated need that exists in our rural and our isolated communities.

I don't know if you have anything else you wanted to share, but I believe you've highlighted, certainly, many of the points that I thought you would raise today. I want to thank you very much for your time and effort and your 15 years of working with our youth in Labrador.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Thank you, Todd.

The Chair: That's just the beginning, Mr. Earle.

I'll now move on to the Conservatives, Mr. Barry Devolin.

• (1130)

Mr. Barry Devolin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would also like to thank Mr. Earle for being here this morning. It's interesting to listen to him. I come from central Ontario, from what I consider to be a rural, non-urban riding. But compared to many of the northern ridings in Canada, my riding is actually, if not medium-sized, then medium-small, compared to large.

It would be interesting, I think, if we took all 308 ridings and somehow evaluated them on a kind of scale from the most rural to the most urban. I would think Nunavut, or the Northwest Territories, or Labrador would be near the top of that list in terms of the largest. We have a couple in northern Ontario, in Kenora, that is also a huge riding.

So in a sense, Mr. Earle, you're here today representing Labrador, but in a broader sense, I think, what your comments actually represent are the most rural, the largest ridings across the country, because I suspect we would hear the same thing from those places.

As we have learned over the past couple of weeks, I guess, the focus of this program is actually primarily on providing meaningful work experiences for students. There is a variety of other good things that come from this program, such as putting dollars in those students' pockets, such as providing not-for-profit and other organizations with assistance for the programs they run that are meaningful, the benefits that people derive from those programs, for example, a summer camp program, or something like that for younger children, or perhaps it's working for a local chamber of commerce.

What I find in the public is that a lot of people, when they look at this program, particularly the employers, see a program that's about

helping employers and about helping communities. That's how they kind of evaluate how it's working. They don't look at it primarily from the point of view of what's good for the students and that that's what determines what gets funded and what doesn't get funded.

My question, Mr. Earle, is this. Given all of that, given that this program currently is structured for the dollars to flow to where the students supposedly are and where the students supposedly have a harder time finding work, which are the two criteria in the funding allocation model within the provinces, and don't have any of these other factors involved, such as possibly reversing the brain drain, things like that, do you think the funding model, which right now has only two factors in it within the province—that is, one, the number of students, as defined by StatsCan, and two, the student unemployment rate...? Those are the objective measures that drive the funding formula. Do you think some of these other things should be added to that funding formula? Or do you think this program should remain focused primarily on providing good work experiences for students?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Obviously, meaningful work experience is extremely important, but I only basically can look at it, and I have the experience of working in a very rural area. In some cases the meaningful work experiences are not there, as they should be. However, I believe Service Canada has done a fairly good job of working with the MPs to determine where the funding goes. I believe the consideration has to be there as it relates to what it's doing for Labrador, in this case, but rural Canada as a whole. It's eroding away...not providing the opportunities for younger people .

If I've got a son or a daughter who decides to leave here and do post-secondary in St. John's or Corner Brook, a more urban area, and they feel that they can't come back to go to work in the summer or can't find meaningful employment and so on in the summer, they're going to end up staying in Corner Brook or St. John's or wherever. That attitude or mentality is going to take over, and they'll say, "I couldn't go to school there, I couldn't get a summer job there, so why am I going to go back there?" Eventually, I believe, we're slowing eroding.... We're giving wrong messages to our students.

I don't think many people are going to come back for six weeks at \$6.25 an hour—I'm thinking about university students in particular—so unless there's more money there, we're going to see more of that. I really can't suggest exactly what factors should be used, but there should be consideration in particular for rural areas to have students come back and get meaningful work experience in their own communities.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Devolin.

Mr. Barry Devolin: Do I have time for a really quick point?

I'm sorry, I was a couple of minutes late arriving. I don't know if Mr. Russell asked this.

How many constituents do you have in your riding? What's the population of Labrador?

Mr. Wayne Earle: It's about 28,000.

Mr. Barry Devolin: I can't help but notice, as a member from rural Ontario, that I have 116,000 constituents in my riding, and my allocation is \$203,000, so if you think that things are bad and can't get any worse, I could say that there are dramatic differences across the country in terms of the number of students you have or the number of people you need to serve with a program. In my riding, which shares some of the same challenges, although maybe not to the degree, I have a percentage of 116,000 constituents who are sharing a \$200,000 pie, while there are many other ridings in the country with, in this case, a quarter—

Mr. Wayne Earle: Yes, but how many industries would be hiring students outside of that?

Mr. Barry Devolin: I'm not crying here; I'm just stating that \$200,000 for a base of 28,000 people isn't bad. I'm in a pretty rural, non-industrial riding.

The Chair: We'll stop right there.

I'm now going on to Madame Bonsant or Madame Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Bonsant of the Bloc Québécois now has the floor.

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good day, Mr. Earle.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Earle: Good morning.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I heard you talking about the Summer Career Placement Program and about school subsidies. Those are two completely different things. The Summer Career Placement Program is designed to help students find a summer job that is compatible with their career choice. When you talk about post-secondary education and tuition fees, you are talking about something completely different. I sympathize with you, but for the time being, we will be talking about the Summer Career Placement Program, which can be of assistance to your students.

If I understood correctly, you work for Service Canada and you are responsible for the Summer Career Placement Program.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Earle: No.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Given the size of your territory, I would like to know whether you have any requests from not-for-profit organizations, which could help you find jobs for these young people...

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting, but I think Mr. Earle answered no when you said that he worked at Service Canada. I would just like to check that with him, because that could change the question.

[*English*]

Mr. Earle, is what Madame Bonsant said about your employment correct?

Mr. Wayne Earle: No, I do not work for Service Canada.

● (1140)

The Chair: Could you tell us exactly what it is you do, just for the record? It might change her question; I don't know.

Mr. Wayne Earle: I work for Employment Assistance Services. My sponsor is the local development association. My job is funded by Service Canada; however, I am not an employee of Service Canada; I'm an employee of the Southern Labrador Development Association, which is my sponsor.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Bonsant will continue.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I thought you worked for Service Canada. I apologize. That is not an insult.

I would like to know whether you know of other organizations that ask for assistance from you with respect to subsidies, or whether you are the only person in charge of everything for Labrador.

Second, you say that the minimum wage is \$6.25 in Labrador. I notice that gas costs just as much in your region as in ours. Would you like to see the minimum wage increased?

Third, would you like us to increase the number of hours of work in order to help young people in your region? We know that the number is currently 30 to 35 hours for a six-week period.

Those are my three questions. Take your time answering them.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Earle: I am not exactly sure if I understand the complete question. However, there seems to be some confusion, I believe—that's the way I understand you—about what I do. I will go a little further to say there are other EAS—Employment Assistance Services—workers throughout Labrador, but I cover just one section of the Labrador coast. I work for the development association. Basically, most all of our funding for students comes from Service Canada; however, I am not a sponsor. I don't apply for funding through Service Canada.

My experience, basically, is working as an employment counsellor, assisting people from all ages, all groups—organizations, aboriginals, and so on—to find meaningful employment and helping them to choose careers. I do, as I say, employment counselling. That's my job.

As it relates to the youth, I work very closely with the youth. My knowledge of what's happening is from working with the youth.

I'm not sure if I answered your question. That's the way I understood what you were asking me.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Mr. Earle, in Quebec, the not-for-profit organizations have 85 per cent of the responsibility for running the Summer Career Placement Program. That is why I asked whether you were somewhat of a central point for providing assistance to these organizations. I'm trying to understand how it works in Labrador, compared to my province. Do you see what I am getting at?

[English]

Mr. Wayne Earle: Somewhat. Not completely.

[Translation]

The Chair: I will give you more time, Ms. Bonsant. Go ahead.

[English]

Ms. France Bonsant: I'll ask you in English, though. Maybe the translation will go more quickly.

In Quebec, usually we've got non-profit organizations in the communities that go with the Placement carrière-été. It is not the government's side to do that. Our government gives us the money, and we decide where it goes, but the money goes to *les communautaires*....

The Chair: She means community organizations.

Ms. France Bonsant: Yes, and they're the ones who take care of the money and the students. I was wondering if in Labrador it works the same way as here in Quebec. I just want to understand the way you work up there.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Yes, I understand that completely.

[Translation]

The Chair: Your English is perfect, Ms. Bonsant.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Earle: Service Canada gets the funding. The Goose Bay office, which is the only district office for Labrador, gets this \$230,000, or whatever the amount is, and then it's mostly organizations like town councils, development associations, women's institutes, and different non-profit organizations that apply to the Service Canada office. Several businesses can, as well. The only difference is that non-profit organizations get 100% funding to hire the students; for-profit businesses get 50% funded for the students, so if it's an \$800 project, the student gets \$800, the business pays \$400, and Service Canada pays \$400.

Did I answer your question?

• (1145)

Ms. France Bonsant: I've got another question later on. Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Mr. Martin is next.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): I appreciate your circumstance and situation up there, and the reduction in the money that you received this year. We had a reduction in our area as well. We're a northern Ontario rural area, as well as a city, and we have a serious youth out-migration. What we'd like to do is find vehicles to try to attract our young people back, or keep them from going away in the first place. We look on this summer employment program as an opportunity to do that, to at least have some of our young people get jobs in the summer that would then expose them to the kind of work that might be possible in northern Ontario, with the end result being, hopefully, that they would decide either to stay or come back, or over time decide to come back with their skills, their training, and their knowledge in order to help us regenerate an economy that has shrunk very significantly over the last 10 or 15 years in those areas.

Could you talk to me a little bit about the connection between summer employment and attracting young people back because of that further economic development in your area?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Okay. First of all, because I worked once for a period of time in northern Ontario, could I ask you exactly which area you're operating from in northern Ontario?

Mr. Tony Martin: It's Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Okay. I worked in Elliot Lake.

Mr. Tony Martin: So did I, for five years.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Is that right? Ironically, it was one of my first job experiences, in fact. I went to school there, and that helped me get work back here later. That's quite ironic.

To get back to your question, I was saying earlier that when our students finish school, they're normally around the age of 17 when they go on to post-secondary education. If they don't get any work experience—get a really meaningful work experience in their own community—they go off. They have to go outside for post-secondary education. Everybody has to—I want to emphasize that it's everybody—from this area. There is no training institution whatsoever in this area.

Each student finishes high school, and most go on to post-secondary education. If we don't provide good work experience, or work with organizations, groups, and businesses to help provide that good work experience for the students.... For example, a student may work in a business like a hotel or tourist business. Working in a place like that may encourage them. They can see an opportunity that they can go on to post-secondary training and come back and start their own little business in tourism. If it's working in a fish plant, they may decide to see it as an opportunity to come back and open up their own little secondary processing business.

We do have quite a bit of tourism. Tourism is on the rise here, and I just use it as an example, but if we don't have more assistance to help those younger people, they're going to find a job much more easily in Corner Brook. If you want to compare some of those towns with some towns you people are living in, Corner Brook has a population of about 20,000, which to us is a major city and to a student is a major city. They have much better opportunities for finding employment as students in Corner Brook, with a population up around 20,000—way better than they would for finding it here.

They realize that they did their schooling outside. They're not going to get that work experience. They're really not going to get a good enough sense of what's happening in their own communities for them to build post-secondary training or build their hopes, their dreams, their careers on coming back to work, because they hadn't had that work experience.

That's what I'm saying—if we don't have more funds to be able to assist, then they're gone. Once they're gone, they rarely come back.

• (1150)

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you for that answer.

I have a second question, then, in terms of the impact on the overall economy of the reduction in money and opportunity for student employment. In my own community we have a number of businesses and not-for-profit agencies whose work ramps up significantly in the summer. The work ramps up in the summer, particularly if it's in tourism, and over the years they've come to count on having a student or two to make it more viable for them to continue to operate.

When the reduced numbers came out this year and they found out that either they didn't get any students, or they got fewer students, or the students they did get were going to work for a shorter period of time, it created some stress, to the point where some of the ventures actually didn't happen. Is that happening in your area?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Yes it is, definitely, and it was more noticeable last year than in other years. Several businesses looked at expanding a bit and doing different things, especially in tourism. I talked to several tourism operators and they said, look, it's no use to me; I can't afford to go out and spend a full salary on somebody right now. But if they had 50% of the salary they would do it. Also, there's a lot of tourism operator business organizations in the area that want people to come back. They go that extra mile to employ a student whenever they can, with some help from a JCP. They sometimes set up programs specifically geared for students to get good work experience. But with \$500 or \$600 assistance like last year, some people didn't hire anybody and didn't do anything at all.

There's another point that I forgot along the way. We've gone through some rough times with the closure and downturn in the fishery, and the parents of those students aren't doing as well as they used to. Those kids are going off to university and coming out with extremely large student loans because their parents can't help them. They haven't got good financial assistance from the programs in the last couple of years.

As I said, every student has to travel out of this area. Every student has to rent an apartment, or a room in residence at a university or trade school. Not one person from our area can live at home and go to school. That's impossible. Some students are doing online courses, but every student from our area—and I want to emphasize that—has to rent a place before they even start to pay for tuition, and so on.

Once they're out there and get compounded student loans, they're deeply in debt, and with the salaries you normally get on the coast of Labrador, they can't afford to come back here to live. So it's another way we're pushing our youth to go elsewhere.

•(1155)

Mr. Tony Martin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Merci.

We'll now go to the second round, and with your approval we'll make it a three-minute round because we're running very late this morning.

Mr. Adams.

Hon. Peter Adams: My name is Peter Adams. I'm the MP for Peterborough sitting here next to Todd. You must find Elliot Lake to be like the banana belt, because I see it's 300 miles or 400 miles south of where you are now.

I think you know that two of the key factors in the allocation of these grants are the number of full-time students between the ages of 15 and 24 and the full-time student unemployment rate in the area. Those two factors are used in a formula that is key to the way this money is allocated.

We're trying to get at regions like yours because it's sort of like a self-fulfilling prophecy. What happens is the number of students goes down so you get less money, and because you get less money the number of students goes down. Do you see what I mean?

Mr. Wayne Earle: Exactly.

Hon. Peter Adams: When your students go away to the College of the North Atlantic, MUN, or Grenfell College, do they sort of officially change their place of residence so you lose them in part of this formula? Do you see what I mean? I wonder if you know that.

Todd mentioned 40% of aboriginal students.... We're very concerned about that. The aboriginal youth population is one of the strongest growing youth populations in the country. We only have a short time, but I wonder if you could comment on any particular problems you know of that apply to aboriginal students.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Basically, I would expect that the same thing is happening to aboriginal students.

Also, I should mention that I am a Métis myself and I sit on a human resources training committee with the Labrador Métis Nation, of which Todd was once the president. I guess you know that. Pretty much the same thing is happening there.

You brought up something we talked about at one of our last meetings. We have done everything to encourage our aboriginal students—in this case I'll speak for Métis because I've been working directly with them. We've been really encouraging Métis students to do post-secondary education. I suspected that aboriginal populations, wherever they are, have not been going outside to do post-secondary training as others do, and they weren't. I've been on this committee now for the last seven or eight years, and I've seen a big change in the numbers of people who are going off and doing post-secondary education.

Basically the same thing is happening there. Once they go, they too are not coming back and are finding employment elsewhere. Again, the more who go out, once they get out there...[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: Is he finished? We've lost him, I think.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: That happens. The phone line is only good for an hour. It gets too hot.

The Chair: I guess the dogs that turn the mill get tired after a while.

We're back.

I'm sorry, Mr. Earle. I think you're used to this much more than we are. We thought we'd lost you forever. I hope the dogs who push the little pedals on the electricity are not too tired and the telephone lines are still going to work again.

You have the telephone. Please keep going.

•(1200)

Mr. Wayne Earle: Yes, I think we got a blink in our electricity, and sometimes that's all it takes. We live with that.

The Chair: Right.

Are you finished?

Hon. Peter Adams: Wayne, that's fine. I think my time is up, and we really appreciate the time you've taken.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

This will be the end of this part of our meeting.

Mr. Earle, I want to say how much we appreciate your taking the time and the effort as well to speak to us on this. It's an important contribution that you are making on this file, because first, you are from an isolated community, and second, you represent not only the Métis population in your community but as well quite a few from the aboriginal population. I think it's a very important factor in the kinds of recommendations we'll be making to the minister when we're finished with this.

Once again, thank you very much for having come to us. I hope to meet you in flesh and blood, as we say in French, very soon.

Goodbye.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Wayne, it's Todd. Thanks again, and say hi to the folks there for me.

Mr. Wayne Earle: Okay, buddy. Thanks a lot.

Bye now.

The Chair: Could I ask our witnesses from Statistics Canada to take their places now, please?

Mr. Barry Devolin: Madam Chair, I have a question, and I'm not sure what the process on this is.

We heard from the department. Members of the department were our first witnesses, and we asked them lots of questions about the program. Since that time some other questions have come to my mind—in fact I'm actually looking for some specific information. I don't want to call the witnesses back again, but I'm wondering, if there are two things I would like to have, by saying them now and putting them on the record, could it result in their actually being forwarded to us?

The Chair: Exactly. What I will do is then send a letter to the department asking them for a response, and they will respond through the clerk.

Mr. Barry Devolin: Right, and I understand that some or all of this information may already be on the way. If that's so, then that's fine, but if it's not, I just want to be very specific about what I think we need.

•(1205)

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Barry Devolin: The first is that I think we all now better understand that this allocation formula is a two-step formula. There's an envelope of dollars—let's say \$98 million—and the first step in the allocation formula is that a certain amount is assigned to each province and territory, and that there must be some way that this is done. And then the second stage is that within the province or territory, the money is divided up among constituencies—and I think we all understand that formula now—which is based on the number of students and the unemployment rate among students.

My question is this, though. I believe the allocation among the provinces is actually of major significance, because just based on the numbers I've heard, I think two parts of the country that may have very similar characteristics in terms of numbers of students or local economies may get dramatically different amounts of money based more on how the money is split up among the provinces rather than how it's split up within the province.

So I would like to ask if we could get two things.

What is the decision-making process? How is that provincial allocation done? And I'd actually like to ask for the actuals for the last 10 years, so I'd like a chart that actually shows, for the last 10 years, what the total budget was—and as I say, now I believe it's \$98 million—but the actual numbers for each of the provinces and territories just in a chart form, so we can see that information; and also, as I said, some explanation of how that decision is made or what that formula is.

My second question is this. It's my understanding that in terms of the riding-by-riding allocation, it's done on the basis of Statistics Canada information that is collected every five years. Last year we seemed to go through this very disruptive adjustment to that. It's my understanding that Statistics Canada or someone has the ability, when we get the new information, rather than using it for five years until new information is available again, to project what's going to happen based on it from year to year—and this is done. This could make smaller incremental adjustments to the riding-by-riding allocation as opposed to these dramatic changes.

But it's also my understanding that at some point in the late nineties a decision was made at the political level, whether it was by the committee or the Parliament, to suspend that. Rather than making small adjustments each year to avoid these big disruptions, the process was suspended. That's how we got so far out of kilter last year. It wasn't just new five-year information; it was new five-year information combined with the fact that there'd been a freeze that created these dramatic effects in some ridings.

I'd also like to see the chart that shows, on a riding-by-riding basis, what the actuals have been for the last 10 years, but I think it would also be interesting to see if someone could provide us with what those numbers would have been if the projections had been used. And I suspect what this is going to show is that in fact it was the committee or Parliament or politicians who made that decision, quite frankly, that is a large part of the explanation for the big change last year, rather than just the five-year information.

And while I recognize that this will be a significant amount of work for someone to pull this together, I think it's really important, because quite frankly, I suspect that one of the conclusions this committee may reach is that we should use that projected information on a year-to-year basis and that failure to do so results in these dramatic crunches or swings down the road. I think we can make that argument in a more compelling fashion if we actually have data to show what did happen in the last seven or eight years and how that might have been avoided if we hadn't frozen those numbers in the first place.

What I'm asking for is data. I hope I have explained this or expressed this in a sufficiently clear manner so that our researcher can actually go and get this information for us.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Devolin. That's an extremely important question.

I'll give Mr. Kerr, our researcher, a chance to answer, because I think he has some information he can give you right now.

Mr. Kevin Kerr (Committee Researcher): Simply, yes, you've been very clear in your request. With respect to the regional allocation, the provincial allocation, once the budget for Canada is set, basically it's the same allocation formula that's used to distribute funds across provinces and territories. There's nothing different. It's the student population times the unemployment rate.

Mr. Barry Devolin: But that's within the provincial envelope. I'm asking—

Mr. Kevin Kerr: It's across the country as well.

The Chair: It's from province to province to territory.

Mr. Barry Devolin: I would like to see that, because as I was listening this morning, what went through my mind was that while my riding may not be a good comparator to Labrador, for example, I want to see what the numbers for the Kenora—Rainy River riding are. I'll bet that riding in many ways is actually very similar to Labrador. Given the fact that ridings in Ontario for the most part have 100,000 or more constituents and even the northern ridings, I suspect, have 70,000 or 80,000, what I suspect is the case is that the envelope for Kenora—Rainy River may be of very similar size to that of Labrador. They may experience many of the same challenges, yet there might be three times as many people in Kenora—Rainy River. I'm sure I could say the same about northern Quebec or other places.

So I'm not casting aspersions on anybody. I would just like to see that data in that way, because that may be another recommendation the committee makes, that for ridings across the country that share similar demographics and whatever the per capita amount of this program should be roughly equivalent and there's no excuse for it being out by a factor of two or three or four.

Mr. Kevin Kerr: I will make the request on behalf of the committee. Within what kind of deadline is the committee asking for this information to be provided?

Mr. Barry Devolin: It's always the same, as soon as possible, but we're not here next week. I think it must be reasonable that the information would be in your hands towards the end of next week and it would be available for us—

•(1210)

Mr. Kevin Kerr: This is just to let the committee know. I've requested some expenditure data back to 1990 at the national level; I requested this more than two weeks ago, and I have yet to receive this information. So I don't know that it's so easy to turn around—

Mr. Barry Devolin: It's the actuals province by province for the last ten years. I'd have to believe someone could—

The Chair: Drawing a comparison might take a little more time, but the actual numbers could be found easily.

Mr. Barry Devolin: Absolutely, especially since there have been only 13 provinces and territories over the last 10 years; that's a one-page chart. I'll guarantee that if the minister asked for that, he'd have it in three hours. Somebody just needs to push the right buttons on their computer, and it should spit that information out.

I think we should ask them to bring it as soon as possible, to immediately send the stuff they can easily and quickly generate, and not to hold off on sending it until they do the more complicated calculations.

The Chair: Fair enough.

Yes, Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Thank you.

I think Mr. Devolin may have covered this, but there are of course inter-constituency numbers within the provinces. In my province, for instance, they received the same amount but it was among constituencies that those numbers varied, so the numbers per constituency within the province are important.

Secondly, I thought I heard the evidence that the department does some massaging of the formula itself. What are the factors that enter into that, or was I mistaken? It seems to me I heard one of the witnesses say this is the basic formula and then they do some internal massaging of those numbers. Is that so or not?

Mr. Kevin Kerr: I don't recall that either, but I do recall the evidence about the decision to stabilize the shares from 2003, if I'm not mistaken, so as a consequence, in order to ensure that stability, there had to be some adjustments.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I'm wondering if we shouldn't know in all of this—and I know it maybe complicates it somewhat—what manipulation had occurred in those numbers and why.

The Chair: Have you finished, Mr. Komarnicki?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Yes.

The Chair: I just want to go back to Mr. Devolin's request. I wonder, Mr. Devolin, whether it might take less time and would not give us less important information if we went back only five years in time. This would allow us to go over the 1981 to 1983 unemployment crisis and so on. It would be more concentrated, but it would also allow us to have the information a lot faster.

Mr. Barry Devolin: Five years would only take us back to 2000. It's my understanding—and maybe someone can correct me—that it was in the late nineties that the decision was made. There would have been census information from 1991 and then from 1996, and it was sometime in the late nineties that the decision was made to no longer use the projections.

So my only concern with going back only five years is that we would miss that; that's why I chose ten years. It wasn't a random choice. I thought it would take us back far enough that we could see the process working the way it was mathematically intended to work for the riding-by-riding part, and then at some point those numbers are going to be flatlined.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm sorry to have made everyone wait.

I'd like to welcome staff from Statistics Canada. We have Ms. Rosemary Bender, director of social and aboriginal statistics. We're very glad to have you here, because the aboriginal statistics are particularly important to us.

We have Mr. François Nault, director of culture, tourism, and centre for education statistics. Welcome, Mr. Nault.

We also have Mr. Peter Morrison, director of labour statistics. So we have number crunchers, as they say down south.

Welcome.

Ms. Bender, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosemary Bender (Director, Social and Aboriginal Statistics, Statistics Canada):

Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for inviting us and for giving us an opportunity to discuss the matters of interest to you with respect to Statistics Canada data, particularly census data.

•(1215)

[*English*]

I will talk a little bit about the census of population and give some very brief introductory remarks.

The census of population, as you know, is conducted by Statistics Canada. It is one of our major activities, where we collect information from every household and every person in Canada. The next census is going to be conducted in May 2006, so we are busy preparing for that.

We collect extensive information every five years for different levels of geography, including the federal electoral districts, on age, the demographic profile of Canadians and their families, their ethnocultural characteristics, aboriginal characteristics, disabilities, education, labour market, and income. We collect all of this information and make it available to support various government, academic, and other studies.

From what I understand, there were some questions about students and where students are counted in the census. I brought with me some of the instructions we provide in our census questionnaire for persons who are not sure whether they should be counted or not, and if they should be counted, where they should be counted. In particular, we have instructions for students, because we have received in the past some questions about whether students who are at university or away for a summer job should be counted at home, where they happen to be at the time of the census, or even if they are at home at the time of the census but they spend most of the year away at school, where they should be counted. So we do make an

effort to try to communicate as clearly as possible to the students where they should be counted.

The instructions you have in front of you are included in all the census questionnaires. A student who returns to live with their parents during the year should be included at their parent's address, even if for part of the year they are living elsewhere to attend school, or have a temporary job or summer job. We try to make this as clear as possible. We have it on the census questionnaire. We have it available on our question hotline. We go to universities and have campaigns in universities and colleges, and we put posters up, just so it's very clear that students should know where they should be counted.

[*Translation*]

The second and third pages of the document give you some idea about the questions on education contained in the census questionnaire. They are there for your information. You are already very familiar with the variables and the questions used in the program in question. The other questions have been included for your information.

[*English*]

With that, I would like to conclude. We understand you have certain questions and clarifications that you would like to ask either me or my two colleagues. We would be more than pleased to respond.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bender. Does this mean that neither Mr. Nault nor Mr. Bender will be making presentations?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Yes, that is the case for the time being, but they are ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Of course. Thank you.

We will begin with Mr. Devolin.

[*English*]

Mr. Barry Devolin: Good morning. Thank you for being here today.

I have a couple of questions about the formula.

I don't want to talk about whether or not we're using the right criteria in the formula. I appreciate that it's not the domain of Statistics Canada. You go out and collect information, and a variety of government organizations use it for a variety of reasons.

For example, I think we've already identified that the target group this program is aimed at, which is up to age 30, isn't the way that you collect your information. Rather than spending a bunch of money to generate new and precise information, the government has made what I think is a reasonable decision to use information that approximates what we're trying to find, which is the up to 25-year-old.

Here's my concern. Your information isn't perfect on a riding-by-riding basis and mistakes are made. We're dealing with a really small base. I think that the number of students is a relatively small number, and so there can be fluctuations. A few mistakes can actually push that number up and down a lot more than a few mistakes on a larger base.

But what concerns me even more is that the student unemployment rate is probably an even less reliable number, because you're combining a small base, which is a number of students, with even less reliable information on whether or not they're employed, or that information is out of date.

I'm not sure who should answer this question. If the student unemployment rate goes from 10% to 7%, which might almost be within the margin of error of that statistic, it could change the allocation by 30% in this formula. Are some of the large swings in these numbers more a result of inaccuracies that are entirely to be expected in data collection?

Quite frankly, some of the changes are within the margin of error, but there are huge consequences when you take those small numbers and apply them to a million-dollar budget. We have situations like Mr. Komarnicki's riding in Saskatchewan, where the allocation was supposed to go from \$290,000 to \$100,000, or something like that.

As statisticians, are you comfortable that your information is being used, however reliable it is, to drive this kind of a program?

• (1220)

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: I can say that one of the powerful outputs of the census is that it provides quite a wide range and a rich source of information, down to very small geographic levels.

But at the same time, we recognize that when you get down to very small geographic levels or very small populations, there is going to be some fluctuation. It's not always due to errors or miscalculations. When you have very small populations, by their very nature they can experience larger fluctuations over time than what you would have on a percentage basis with a much larger population.

Mr. Barry Devolin: I understand that and accept that.

My point is that for this information, I'm thinking very specifically of student unemployment. There could be relatively large changes. Going from 10% to 7% is a 30% change. When this formula is driven mathematically by the number of students in the riding, multiplied by student unemployment in the riding, divided by those same two factors provincially, and then multiplied by the provincial allocation to give you the riding allocation, small changes in there can push that number from 150 to 200 down to 100.

As statisticians, you must look at certain government programs and say that you're comfortable that your data is being used to create those real world results. There must be other programs that you look at and think there are real world consequences of shifts in this data that you realize may not reflect changes in reality but may only be within the margin of error of your statistics.

You're aware of a lot of programs that use your data. Is this a program that causes you some uneasiness about how your information is being used?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: When we share our information and data with the government departments that use these to develop and monitor policies, we discuss the nature of the data, the different characteristics of the data, and the different variations and characteristics that they could use. At the same time, we ensure that the basis of the statistics we provide to them will in general lead to quite sound input for their policies.

If you move from 10% to 7%, it's a very small change, but it can have a larger impact. It's really up to those who are developing the programs to say that is the type of input they require for policies.

Mr. Barry Devolin: I understand. I apologize if I'm not being clear.

I notice here that Mr. Morrison is specifically from labour statistics. I'm not asking you about the appropriateness of who's making what decision. I'm asking you, as people who understand statistics, are you comfortable with the way your information is being used, and would you agree or disagree that some of these changes and allocations may not reflect reality but may reflect only incremental changes in the numbers that have these massive impacts?

I don't know if Mr. Morrison would like to comment on that.

Mr. Peter Morrison (Director, Labour Statistics, Statistics Canada): I really can't comment on the census figures, but what I can comment on is, for example, the *Labour Force Survey*. The *Labour Force Survey* produces the unemployment rates for the 58 employment insurance regions. That is a formula that we use and it's one that we're very comfortable with in terms of how it's used for the allocation of the EI funds.

• (1225)

Mr. Barry Devolin: Is that data used for this program?

Mr. Peter Morrison: Not that I know of. I believe, though I'm not completely sure of the accuracy of it, the change went from a hybrid use of *Labour Force Survey* and census figures to exclusively using the census figures.

Mr. Barry Devolin: It sounds to me like you're suggesting the labour force figures may be more accurate or more reliable.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No, I wouldn't suggest that at all. All I can suggest is that the *Labour Force Survey* is intended to produce national and provincial estimates, and that is where the reliability factor rests. So if you're potentially using *Labour Force Survey* student populations to allocate the provincial aggregate funds, then I would say that's probably a reliable use. But once you go below the provincial levels to a riding level, the *Labour Force Survey* is not the mechanism to do it. The reliability is not there.

The Chair: Sorry Mr. Devolin, I'm going to have to cut you off there.

Mr. Paul Forseth: Ms. Bender wanted to add something.

The Chair: All right. Give a short answer, please, Madam.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Thank you. A short answer is that while I can't comment directly and provide a judgment on whether for that specific program the data are robust enough or accurate enough, this is certainly something that we can do and do with HRSDC and Service Canada. It is something we can look into more fully, if you want, on this particular question.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now go on to Madame Gagnon.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): I want to be sure I understand. The budget of the Summer Career Placement program is distributed according to the number of students in ridings and their rate of unemployment. The figures from the 2001 census were used to draw up the 2005 budget for the program. How were the census figures used for the 2004 budget different? What changed so much to cause dissatisfaction with the way in which budgets are allocated to ridings? Did the unemployment rate drop, which would have resulted in a reduced budget, or were there fewer students?

I'm having trouble understanding why these two calculation methods had a direct impact on the budget.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: If I understand correctly, the demographic statistics used for the second calculation were based on the 2001 census, and on the new ridings. In addition, the demographic statistics used in the first calculation were based on the 1996 census, and on the former riding boundaries.

Thus, two factors influenced the demographic statistics from the census: first, the riding boundaries, and second, the actual changes that had occurred between the two censuses.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: The unemployment rate is lower now than it was in 1996. Did that have an impact? Do these data have an impact on the results? I do understand that the number of students is a factor, but there's also the unemployment rate.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We provided both data: the number of people in the student age group, and the unemployment rate for the same age group.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Which of the two data has the greatest impact on the way in which the budget is distributed?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: It would be better to ask a departmental representative this question. He or she could explain how the department uses our data in its forms and what the impact of this is depending on the region. The department could provide you with better information on that.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: I have a question about statistics on students between the ages of 15 and 24, because the Summer Career Placement Program is for students between the ages of 15 and 30. How can this affect the budgets provided? Students between age 24 and 30 have been left out, and this could have an impact on the results. In some ridings, there may be more students between age 24 and 30. Could this have a positive impact, and mean that some ridings would get more money?

•(1230)

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Statistics could be available for all age groups up to age 30 and even beyond. The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development could tell you about the

consequences of using a new series of statistics to determine the formula and the payments.

The Chair: Do you wish to comment, Ms. Bonsant?

Ms. France Bonsant: I have a question about statistics. Could there not be a quarterly adjustment between 2001 and 2006? We know that the number of students varies: some complete their education, while others go back to school. Would it not be possible to redo the calculation scientifically or geographically to avoid a radical change from one year to the next or after five years? Some ridings lost 66 per cent of the budget they had received and they were not pleased about this at all. That is why I was wondering if there were a logical or a scientific way of doing a census in the middle of the year.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We could provide you with estimates and projections regarding the 15 to 24-year-old population or for other age groups, as well as with unemployment rates, between censuses. We could certainly set up the terms and conditions as regards those groups.

On the other hand, to do a half-yearly census would be somewhat more complicated; that would represent a challenge.

Ms. France Bonsant: I was not referring to a census, but rather to a formula or an extrapolation.

The Chair: Ms. Bonsant, was it not rather a question of wanting to know why you take into account people from the age of 15 to 24 rather than people from the age of 15 to 30...

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: That question was asked earlier.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Ms. Bender's answer was not clear.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: We could ask it again, because I did not find your answer to be clear and satisfactory.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We are able to produce statistics for both the 15 to 24-year-old group as well as for the 15 to 30-year-olds.

Ms. France Bonsant: Ms. Gagnon's question was not on statistics, but rather on the reason why you have not kept statistics on the 15 to 30-year-old student group for the summer placement program.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: The choice of variables and of age groups is not made by Statistics Canada, but rather by the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and by Service Canada. They ask us for statistics, and we provide them according to the formula they have drafted.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Do the departments not extrapolate when they say, because they do not have statistics on the 15 to 30-year-old group, that they believe that 10 per cent of the population is between the ages of 24 to 30? Or are they relying on the 15 to 24-year-old group statistics?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We could provide statistics for the 15 to 30-year-olds.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: It is the department that...

Ms. France Bonsant: All right, we will ask our question of the department.

The Chair: Your time has expired, Madam.

Mr. Martin.

[English]

Mr. Tony Martin: I don't have any questions at this time. I'm not somebody who's well versed in statistics, numbers, but I did appreciate the questions asked by others, particularly Mr. Devolin. I will read the record as to the answers and look forward to—

The Chair: How well I understand you, Mr. Martin.

Mr. Adams.

Hon. Peter Adams: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I know you were here earlier and you've heard these various questions. We are concerned that, the way the program has developed, it disadvantages rural areas and it compounds problems. The trends, which I'm sure you know, the unemployment and population demographic trends, are occurring in rural areas. In terms of the student population calculation, we suspect there's something wrong with it. And in terms of student EI, we do. Whatever is wrong with the way that feeds into the formula compounds problems that rural areas already have.

Barry Devolin's riding is a typical—large in numbers and, by the way, large in area—Ontario riding that has one of the highest percentages of seniors in the country, but you can imagine there's a student element to this seniors thing. You heard part of the discussion with Labrador, which is sort of the opposite. It's a small number, large area, 40% aboriginal; therefore, it has a very high percentage, I would imagine, of students.

I'd like you to bear that in mind when I ask the questions, and then perhaps you could talk about it.

Can you provide us with information on which constituencies experienced the greatest growth in student population and which the greatest decline in the period 1996-2001?

Can you tell us in which areas, constituencies if possible, the unemployment rate changed the most in the same period?

Can you comment on or give us information on the extent to which the 15- to 24-year-old population, which is the one that's being targeted here, has shifted from rural to urban between 1996 and 2001?

With respect to aboriginal, I mentioned that because of the growth rate in the aboriginal population. Do you have information for the same period on the growth of the 15- to 24-year-old group among the aboriginal people?

Last, another way entirely of dealing with this would be to come up with a completely other definition of rural. We in our constituencies get different constituency allowances depending on the size of our ridings, so if it's a very big riding you get a large one. And it's broken down in great detail into eight different sizes.

Then also, cutting into that, there is another definition that I don't understand properly yet. My riding, for example, is technically 40% rural, and there are some other measures—I don't know if my colleagues know what they are. But if you accept that there is a problem with the statistics, I wonder if another approach would be to say these are rural ridings, and just throw in a factor that deals with rural ridings of a certain type.

Any comments you have the committee would be most grateful for.

• (1235)

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Thank you.

Maybe I can start with your last question and then go with the other ones.

When we support government departments that are planning or developing policies or programs, we usually meet with them to tell them what data are available. We don't really provide input into what data they should use, but certainly we're there to respond to their questions: Do you have these data? What other data do you have? What other data do you collect? What are the characteristics of those data? Do you have data on rural and urban? Do you have other ways of defining rural and urban? We're able to provide them with a pretty good sense of what sort of data would be available for them to use in their formulas or in their programs or policies. They take that and they determine their data requirements and then we provide them with the data.

We could provide them with some information on rural and urban, and we can tell them what we have and what we collect, but on exactly what definition they should be using or what sort of data they should be using, it's really up to the policy departments to determine what it is that they're going to use.

Hon. Peter Adams: Madam Chair, not to interrupt the flow, if you have a simple way of getting at two or three examples of the way rural can be defined, the committee would be quite interested—not now, but in the future.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Okay, certainly.

In response to your question on looking at 1996 to 2001 data, for 1996 we can certainly provide you with a good profile by federal electoral district, by constituency, and for 2001 we can do the same. When you want to look at the growth between 1996 and 2001, it is definitely possible and feasible for those areas that have not changed boundaries. That's very simple. We have them both. They haven't changed boundaries. We can provide you with the figures for one and the other, and the difference is the growth.

For those areas that have undergone boundary changes, we don't have an immediate answer, because some of the changes between the two censuses can be due to actual changes in growth, whereas others are due to boundary changes. It can be done, and we have done it for certain geographic areas, but we haven't done it for federal electoral districts. It's a complex operation.

Hon. Peter Adams: Madam Chair, I understand that, and it might take months or something, but are there some Stats Canada unit areas that could be used as examples? I understand they wouldn't coincide with the ridings, but there might be one in a very remote area.

Do you understand what I mean? You can see what we're getting at here.

• (1240)

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Yes.

Hon. Peter Adams: If you could, give us anything that would give us an indication, certain types of it. Are the urban areas defined benefiting in some way, the way we think, by creaming off people from rural areas? If you could, give us some census examples of that.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Yes, and once we establish that geographic concordance between boundaries, then we can apply it to the growth in the numbers, to the change in unemployment rates, to the change in the 15- to 24-year-old population, and to the rural-urban split. All of those are possible for us to provide you information on the change between the two censuses once we've established that concordance.

We have established it for certain geographic regions, certainly for some of what we call our census divisions, which are equivalent to counties in some provinces. We do have it for those areas across the country and we do have it for some of our metropolitan areas, so for certain geographies this concordance is already there and we could provide you with the information.

Hon. Peter Adams: I think, Madam Chair, if they have a sense of that, if there's useful material you—and I would stress this—could easily obtain, we'd be glad to have it.

Madam Chair, if he could, I'd like Todd Russell to ask my last question.

The Chair: Mr. Adams, you're out of time.

We'll try to make time for you to come back, Mr. Russell.

We're now into our second round of five minutes.

Mr. Komarnicki.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: I have some specific questions for Ms. Bender.

I'm looking at the form you handed out, and it's regarding the questions to be filled out specifically by people aged 15 and over. It is basically gathering information about the particular student, but I don't see in that information questions related to actual residency. In the prelude to it you indicate that it's meant to include everyone who usually lives at the address, and it says students who return to live with their parents during the year should be included at their parents' address even if they're living elsewhere.

Now, do you have specific questions relative to student residency in the census form that are directed to whoever is completing the form?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We don't have specific questions on that.

I'm not sure if I understand your question.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: The questions you have here are specifically related to, if they're students, where they're attending, what they're taking, and so on, but is there a question specifically directed by the census-taker in the form that asks how many people who live at this address are students or asks something directed specifically to students?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We don't have a specific question. There is a question that asks if they attend school, so for that we are able to get it for the household members.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: If the parent is answering, of course he'll say he doesn't attend school. Do you have another question that asks if they have children who are attending school?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: The census questionnaire is filled out on a household level, so the person who's answering the census questionnaire answers for herself or himself and every member of the household who usually resides there. If they have a child who's a student and usually resides during the summer months or for some period of time at their residence, then they would include them in their responses; they would be counted as a student.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: There's a provision in the form for that type of information to be brought to their specific attention, the student issue?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: I'm not sure I understand the question. We can compile statistics on school attendance and on the age profiles. What specific information would you want?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Maybe I'm misunderstanding what you're saying, but if you come and take a census in my household and my daughter is residing, let's say, in Regina and going to university there, in the census taking do you have a specific question directed to me that would relate to her?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: No, what we would ask is that you include her in your census questionnaire, so you would have the information on her, but we would not have a specific question asking if you had done so.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: So it would be subject to the person completing or the person asking the question. It would be just an exchange of information.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: As with all questions on the census, it is really a self-enumeration. It is really up to every individual to include everyone who should be there and to answer all the questions related to the people in the household. We don't have specific questions on the relationship of parents and students living in another place and going to university.

● (1245)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Okay. And I gather from you that there wasn't any census change in terms of questionnaires between 1996 and 2001?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: No, not for those questions.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Okay.

In my riding, for instance, there was a reduction of about 950 students outside of how the form was completed. Is there any rational explanation you might have for what might be happening?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: I can't comment today on the numbers from your specific area, but what I can tell you is that the census does provide information on the number of people in your area, and it can perhaps also provide other information that can help you analyze the changes from one period to another. We have some questions not only on the population, age, and demographic profiling in regard to education, but also some related questions on mobility, for example. And we do ask the question, where were you one year ago or where were you five years ago? So that may provide you with some information that may help explain some of the changes from one census to another.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: And that's something we can get from your department or your office?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now move on to Mr. Russell.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Yes, my question is on some of the census data, where questions sometimes change from one census gathering period to another, say from 1996 to 2001. Were there any changes in the questions that would impact the data in the two categories that we're talking about?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: There were no questions that would impact that.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: What about in terms of the timing when the questions are asked? For instance, if you collect data in one area, let's say where there's a high seasonal unemployment rate.... If you ask questions in, say, Newfoundland and Labrador in the summer, you will get a much different unemployment rate figure than if you asked the questions in the winter.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Yes.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: So were there any changes in terms of when the questions were asked, from one census data period to the other?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: No, the questions were asked at the same time in May.

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Is that all you have as questions, Mr. Russell?

Mr. Todd Norman Russell: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Ms. Bonsant, you may ask your question now.

Ms. France Bonsant: Thank you. I do not believe that I correctly understood your answer regarding registrations. Is there an area in which students can indicate whether they are continuing their studies in their hometown or elsewhere? Is there also an area in which they fill in their permanent address and their temporary address while they are studying? Would it not be easier, from those two questions, to obtain statistics that would allow for the identification of people from rural regions who are going to urban centres to go to school? There is no university in my municipality, with a population of 110. People make a two to three-hour trip in order to go to school. Is there not some way for Statistics Canada to really specify the permanent

address as well as the temporary address of these students, as well as giving the number of kilometres they must travel?

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We do not usually ask for addresses. We only ask for them for the purpose of gathering data, in order to ensure that we have counted everyone and that we have only done so once. When we have that information and we have completed the data collection, we enter that information into the database, without however entering names and addresses. And so that is not information we have in our database.

Our goal is to ensure that we are collecting information on students according to where they go to school and to their permanent addresses. Our approach is one of giving sufficiently clear instructions and directions, so that everyone fills it out in the same way, but we do not collect extra information as to where students are when they are not at home.

Ms. France Bonsant: Many students provide the address of their temporary student lodgings, rather than using their permanent address. That is what distorts the data.

Is there a vote?

• (1250)

The Chair: We will inquire as to why the bells are ringing, and we will keep you informed.

Ms. France Bonsant: Many students live in residence, or rent a place to live. For them, that is their permanent address.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: We are aware of the fact that there may be some confusion and that some students, despite our efforts, are not aware of the reason for that question. Therefore, we make extra efforts and even use publicity in the universities and colleges in order to try and reinforce our message. On the other hand, it is possible that some students use an address that is not their parents'.

Ms. France Bonsant: You do much more work in statistics than I do, but it seems to me that this is the reason why it would be easier to analyze this issue in detail. It would be of assistance to us if we had statistics on what is happening in the urban environment as compared to the rural environment, because people are leaving the rural regions in droves.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry to interrupt, but there's a quorum call in the House right now. We'll never get there fast enough for the quorum call, I wouldn't think, so we'll just continue, if you agree to that.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant: I want to make sure that in analyzing the issue closely, the statistics would be clearer.

Mrs. Rosemary Bender: Indeed, it is a question of being up-to-date.

Ms. France Bonsant: People have told me that they provided the address of their current residence, and not their parents' address.

The Chair: Mr. D'Amours wanted to ask a question, but he was obliged to leave. We will end our meeting on that note.

I would like to thank you, Ms. Bender, Mr. Nault and Mr. Morrison for having come today. You have brought us very important information, because the statistics, the figures, and the way in which the calculations are made represent what seems to me to be a fundamental issue within the framework of this government program.

I thank you very much.

[*English*]

This is not the end of our meeting, but actually the end of this part of it. I will suspend.

Do not get up, except for our witnesses and the public.

I would ask the public to leave, please, because we will go in camera right now.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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