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

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**Tuesday, November 1, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco**

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

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

• (1110)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC)):** Colleagues, we're prepared to begin. I see a quorum.

This is the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This is meeting 49, on Tuesday, November 1.

We are having further witnesses today, some through video conference and some in person. I see on our list here at least five witnesses; we welcome you all.

Eventually the transcripts of these proceedings will be available on the Internet. This committee hopes to present a report to Parliament and to the public; it will also be available on the Internet. This is a series of meetings we're holding to gather evidence; at some point, the committee will have to come to some conclusions and make some recommendations.

Our first witness, Pierre Vigeant, director general of the Fédération québécoise des centres communautaires de loisir, has about three minutes to make a statement. We'll go through our witness list, and then we'll go the rounds with the parties with a question and answer session.

Mr. Vigeant, please begin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant (Director General, Fédération québécoise des centres communautaires de loisir):** Thank you very much for your invitation.

Since we're a provincial organization, I've conducted a brief survey on the Summer Career Placement Program and compared its implementation in 2005 to that in 2004. I gathered data from 24 community recreation centres in eight regions of Quebec. I'd like to tell you that the new distribution in 2005 generally had the effect of increasing the number of positions and the number of weeks granted to the community organizations with which I work. I could cite the examples of Beauport, Longueuil, Côte-des-Neiges and Charlesbourg, where we saw significant increases. However, this came at the expense of community organizations located in major urban centres and in downtown neighbourhoods, probably because the way in which criteria were applied changed.

As a result, there are fewer youths in the downtown and poorer neighbourhoods. There's also a greater concentration of community organizations in poorer neighbourhoods because community organizations work more with poor families. That's had a direct effect on an amount of money that is not available for community organizations working in downtown neighbourhoods. While needs are greater, resources have been cut, and a number of organizations have had their applications rejected or reduced more or less significantly. There has been no progression as there has been in suburban neighbourhoods or in the outlying areas of major urban centres. This of course is important for the organizations in terms of human resources. It also represents work experience for the youths who work in the social and health professions. They're sensitized and attracted to the work places that the community organizations constitute. This is an effect we observed last year, and we'd like to emphasize it.

The situation is the same in the rural areas. We have two centres, one in Fort-Coulonge and the other in Saint-Sixte. There has been no increase in the number of youths in the regions, but needs there remain significant. The Summer Career Placement Program is a program that encourages young people to return to their regions in summer. But these centres have seen no increase. There have even been cuts, in some cases, from five to two positions. These are always small envelopes, but this is important for a community organization.

In closing, if we consider the example of the Fédération québécoise des centres communautaires de loisir, a provincial agency, the fact that we're located in a poor neighbourhood puts us at a disadvantage because priority goes first to organizations working in a community. When the envelope is small, the money available definitely won't go to provincial organizations on a priority basis. This year, we didn't have an opportunity to take advantage of the Summer Career Placement Program, even though we could have offered significant work experience.

• (1115)

**The Chair (Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)):** Thank you very much, Mr. Vigeant.

Good morning, everyone. I apologize for being late. I'd particularly like to welcome Ms. Nathalie Durand, a human resources technician at the social services centre in Laval, my favourite riding.

Since you've just arrived, Ms. Durand, I'll turn the floor over to other speakers.

Ms. Mathieu, from the Conseil Sport Loisir de l'Estrie, over to you.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu (Leisure Councilor, Leisure and Sport, Conseil Sport Loisir de l'Estrie):** Thank you for your invitation.

The Conseil Sport Loisir is a regional sports and recreation unit in the Eastern Townships. It is an organization that is established in each of the regions of Quebec.

I'm mainly concerned with summer recreation services, and that's mainly what my testimony will focus on today. I'm also going to tell you a lot about the situation in rural areas and about what the effects that cuts to the Summer Career Placement Program can have.

You have before you a review report that was prepared by the Forum jeunesse Estrie, a youth action group that got wind of the cuts and asked themselves some questions. At that time, in reaction to the situation, they conducted a very quick survey this summer to determine what the impact had been on young people. That's the document that was distributed to you.

In 2003, I prepared a report on summer recreation services in my region. So I'm going to draw a parallel between these two documents and tell you a little about the situation we experienced in 2005.

To give you a little background, our rural community consists of 88 municipalities, 90 percent of which have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants. That's really a snapshot of the situation.

Rural areas have seen a distinct decline in the organization of public recreation, to the point where, in some communities, the very survival of public recreation is at stake. The summer recreation service is often the only service that municipalities still offer their citizens.

Rural areas are characterized by strong youth migration to the urban centres, where there are more services related to education and work and business opportunities. The regions are emptying, rural areas becoming unstructured and home communities offer less and less of a future to young people, who are often reluctant to leave their communities.

Recreation, particularly in rural areas, is a volunteer field. Ninety percent of those offering recreation are volunteers. They are active at all levels and band together to provide quality of life services. This is the only way to do things in rural areas. Since the communities are unable to pay recreation professionals, it's committees of volunteers that are in the field. These committees also manage the summer recreation service.

I'm briefly going to draw a parallel between the two documents. According to the report that was prepared in 2003, 68 percent of summer recreation services provided an average of eight weeks of service. This summer, the average time offered in the context of the Summer Career Placement Program was between six and seven weeks only. So there was one week when parents or the municipality had to pay more. Otherwise, we would have run deficits.

One of the consequences is a shortening of the employment period. These jobs are a little less appealing to Cegep and university

students. So we recruit high school students for whom this is their first work experience. They need a lot of training, and they need to be taken in and supervised during their first work experience. However, since there have been cuts and the number of service weeks has been reduced, this entire intake and learning period was shortened as well.

What is difficult in rural areas is that one summer recreation service in three has recruitment problems. The young people aren't there. There's also an impact on the number of hours worked. We realized this summer — you can see this in the report — that some of the positions for young people were cut. However, it's mainly the number of weeks and the number of hours per week that were cut.

This summer, according to the report, an average of 30 hours were granted under the Summer Career Placement Program. That's fine because a summer recreation service offers an average of 30 hours of service. However, parents in rural areas need more. They work a little earlier and often in rural areas. So they have to have their children babysat before the recreation service starts. More than 50 percent of services provide day care service, which increases the average number of hours per week provided by the services to 50.

When you have employees working only 30 hours a week, as many as 20 percent of summer recreation services offer a part-time service. On Mondays and Wednesdays, they offer service for children five to eight years of age, and, on Tuesday and Thursdays, for older children, nine to 12. So the service isn't offered five days a week, as a result of which parents, once again, have to have their children babysat.

Lastly, I want to go back to the procedures of the Summer Career Placement Program. There are some problems with regard to the time for filing an application. The deadline is often March 31. Since they are in rural areas and volunteer committees are involved, people don't have the human resources to complete the form. Thus it is often the secretary-treasurer of the municipality who completes the form, and she's not necessarily in the field. If there is an increase in registration for summer recreation services, we need more facilitators.

That's obviously not written in these documents.

• (1120)

We received a reply for the Summer Career Placement Program at the end of May of this year. Some even received one in the first week of June. For example, the organization I represent sent out camp training offers in May. We start registration in early May. However, since we don't know how many employees there will be in the rural areas, it's delayed.

Ultimately, we don't know until May how much money we're going to receive for our employees. So we have to hire them quickly, as a result of which I receive them for training when they've just been hired. In fact, many receive training the day after they're hired.

Consequently, some parents are unfortunately told that their children haven't been selected because we have to stick to a certain ratio for safety reasons.

In closing, in a society that requires more and more knowledge and experience, the Summer Career Placement Program is still one of the only programs that makes it possible to acquire these kinds of qualifications. However, the cuts shorten the time available in which to acquire them. The young people involved, who are having their first work experience, are at a loss as to how to learn their role and duties. They have to be operational as soon as they're hired. In summer recreation services, the responsibilities taken on by these young people far exceed their abilities.

Ultimately, the work experience is not satisfactory. The image that young people get of the working world is biased and unmotivating. Their perception of their municipality is negative because they don't feel supervised. Ultimately, they want to leave their community in order to have better living conditions.

The rural communities don't have the necessary critical mass for development, and their ability to pay is limited. They have few services, few physical and human resources in all areas, particularly recreation. If financial assistance is cut, the communities will have to close their services, and parents will have to travel to neighbouring municipalities. Youths will go to work in the cities, and children won't develop a sense of belonging to their village.

This is the vicious circle of devitalization of rural communities.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mathieu. A number of points that you raised have previously been mentioned by others. They will no doubt be part of our recommendations to the minister.

I now turn the floor over to Ms. Linda Bourassa, from the Table de concertation jeunesse Ahuntsic.

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa (President, Table de concertation jeunesse Ahuntsic):** Good afternoon. I represent the Table de concertation jeunesse Ahuntsic. I am its president and I'm also the director of a community organization. So I know what the Summer Career Placement Program provides in the field.

This is an extremely important summer project for community organizations. It makes it possible to increase human resources, and thus to provide more services to young people and to set up various projects, particularly in poor neighbourhoods and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. So these are very important projects.

It is also important to provide young people with their first work experience. Obviously, the employment we give them depends on the community. For example, we work in a youth centre for 12 to 18 year-olds. So we don't hire young high schools students who are the same age as the youths in our clientele. We hire Cegep and university students.

The biggest problem with regard to the Summer Career Placement Program is really the date on which we receive an answer. In fact, we generally receive an answer in May. Since university courses finish in April, most young people have already found jobs. That limits our choice, since we often wind up with those who haven't found a job. So they're obviously not always the best ones. The project acceptance date should be reviewed so that we can have an answer in March or April at the latest, which would help give us a better selection of candidates.

●(1125)

**The Chair:** I know there will be questions later. So I won't ask any for the moment.

Thank you very much, Ms. Bourassa.

I now turn the floor over to Ms. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné, from the Edmundston Madawaska Tourism Office.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné (Director, Edmundston Madawaska Tourism Office):** I represent the Edmundston Madawaska Tourism Office. We take part in a number of festivals and attractions that are held during the summer. We're also set up on tourist and historic sites, such as museums. For us, student projects are a major contribution in that they enable us to provide optimum service during those activities and festivals.

The Summer Career Placement Program definitely provides us with skilled labour. In summer, it enables us to bring back to the region students who normally have to leave it in order to pursue their education.

I agree with what was mentioned earlier about the slowness in responding to project applications. It's very difficult in May.

Let's take the Jazz Festival, which is the first festival to be held in the region, in the third week of June. Last year, we got an answer in early June. We had the program for six weeks, but we could only really take advantage of it for three weeks, because the festival ended then.

So it's a bit hard for us to enable these students to acquire optimum work experience. They arrive during the very busy festival period, and the training is done quickly, sometimes not in optimum conditions. The ideal thing would thus be to review the project award date, to move it forward to mid-April, at the latest, to enable us to hire these students much earlier.

Sometimes the number of weeks is also a problem. Let's take the case of the Jazz Festival, once again. Employees arrive late and we can only use them very little. For other tourist attractions, such as the visitor information centres, it's extremely difficult. The municipality doesn't have enough money to hire these young people for 12 or 14 weeks, which would be ideal. However, a six-week project complicates service delivery during the period from early June until the end of August, as is the case at the visitor information centres.

I think the programs are very important in enabling us to offer events, festivals and tourist services. We know that tourism is very seasonal and that this provides these young people with good work experience. However, the program should enable us to be more flexible with hiring dates and the number of hours of work.

So it would definitely be extremely hard for us to conduct our activities and festivals and to maintain the tourist industry in our region at a high level without the assistance of programs like the Summer Career Placement Program.

Those are the points I wanted to raise. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

I now turn the floor over to Nathalie Durand, a human resource technician at the Centre des services sociaux de Laval.

**Mrs. Nathalie Durand (Technician Human Resources, Centre de services sociaux de Laval (CLSC-CHSLD du Ruisseau-Papineau)):** Good morning.

First, the Centre de santé et de services sociaux de Laval contains four CLSCs, shelters and the Cité de la Santé. So we have three different missions.

The Summer Career Placement Program is clearly an important recruiting source for us, in view of the current lack of resources. It definitely contributes employees and that also enables students who work with us to learn about the various missions, perhaps the shelter in particular, which is less well known and worth knowing. These are often students who come from year to year and subsequently stay in the region. So it's important for us.

Perhaps I'll be repeating things that people have said. The project acceptance dates are increasingly late. Consequently, we often can't even take advantage of the maximum number of weeks allotted to us because the projects are accepted later.

This year, we had a problem that was raised. I think this is important, since we lack staff in the health system. These people will eventually start retraining and will turn toward those professions.

There was nevertheless a project for which we were not reimbursed because the candidate was 41 years old. So the project acceptance dates should be reviewed. We think that people go back to the labour market after having a job they may not have liked as much. Now they want to have a job they like. Of course, we can't hire them, because we've been reimbursed for a given year and have been denied reimbursement for the other year. This creates a minor shortfall. In any case, that would be important for us. The health system being what it is, I think we have to have a broader vision.

That's really what I had to say. The health system and students are important, and we're offering them a good entry to our region.

Thank you.

• (1130)

**The Chair:** Ms. Durand, I know there will be a lot of questions. So you'll have an opportunity to speak at that time.

We'll now go to the first round of questions and answers, for seven minutes.

Mr. Devolin, over to you.

[English]

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning to everybody.

My first question is very short, and I'd like everyone to answer it if they would.

We've heard from many witnesses that the timelines are too tight and there isn't sufficient time to get things approved for summer. One of the suggestions put forward is that all the timelines be pushed back—or brought ahead, I guess—30 days, so that everything would happen one month earlier. My question is simply, in your opinion, is that sufficient to address this concern, if the timelines were moved

back a month, or one month earlier? If not, how many days, in your opinion, do these timelines need to be changed in order to work for you?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** I'm going to start with Mr. Vigeant, to follow my list.

Mr. Vigeant, over to you.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I think it would already be a step in the right direction. Of course, it also has to be said that not all organizations wind up in this situation; it's mainly the smallest organizations that operate with volunteers. For example, if they file an application in January, they're not always in a position to see what staff they need. In any case, I think that doing this as soon as possible would already be a step in the right direction.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathieu.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** It would obviously be a very good idea to move the deadline forward. However, some support will have to be put in place. I'm talking about a form of assistance for people in completing the form. People have trouble completing the form and expressing themselves. This shows that it's important to have a particular employee. There are nevertheless criteria in each of the regions.

At that point, yes, it's possible to move the date forward, but perhaps we'll have to provide a little more support in the offices for people completing the form.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bourassa.

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa:** I won't repeat what everybody said. It's obviously already an improvement if it's done a month earlier. Yes, that will clearly help us recruit people.

Currently, to get better candidates, we recruit and we wait to give them an answer. We retain three candidates, and we ultimately accept one to fill the position. We have to say no to two people and only keep one. If we could do the reverse, that would definitely be good.

• (1135)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** It could indeed be very good to move the responses forward one month. I think we could all benefit from that and have a better chance of recruiting the right people to fill the right positions.

**The Chair:** Ms. Durand.

**Mrs. Nathalie Durand:** I entirely agree on that. Moving it forward one month is no problem with regard to the health system.

**The Chair:** Thank you. You have some time left.

[English]

You have time left, Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** There is another issue that has arisen on more than one occasion. We all know that more and more people are moving into urban centres and more and more young people are migrating from rural communities into urban centres. It seems to me that this program reinforces that. The dollars available to different ridings...because as you know, this is an unusual program. The dollars are actually allocated on a riding-by-riding basis rather than on a provincial or regional basis. As time goes on, rather than the dollars following the students, it may be the students following the dollars.

I'm wondering if any of you from a more rural part of Quebec have had any experience with that or could offer anything anecdotally to the committee that this is happening. Are young people from rural areas, who maybe go to school in the city, ending up staying there in the summer rather than doing what they want, which may be to come back to their home town, because the dollars are available in the urban constituencies?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Who would like to answer that question?

Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I believe that's somewhat what we're experiencing here in Edmundston. We're in northwestern New Brunswick. Most of our students attend the University of Moncton, in the southern part of the province. When a city like Moncton can offer a student 12 weeks of employment, it's obviously more attractive for that student to stay in Moncton than to come back home, if I only have six weeks to offer that student and I'm depending entirely on student projects to offer that position.

So it's definitely a disadvantage for us because very few full university programs are offered in our region. If our students travel to the bigger centres, it's obviously very hard to bring them back home with only one student project.

Of course, we offer higher wages, but the number of weeks often plays against us.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Would anyone like to add anything?

Ms. Mathieu.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** I've talked a lot about the rural community, precisely so that we can try to find a way to give them preference. Currently, under the criteria, there's more money where there are more young people, and the program maintains that trend. Couldn't there be a way to distribute the money so that rural areas come out ahead?

If we continue this way, the rural communities will gradually disappear. Ultimately, it's the parents and society in general that will lose out. With no more services, parents will move closer to places where they are offered. As I was saying, it's really a vicious circle. A way should be found, in the context of the program, to offer appealing jobs in these areas. Whether it's offered in a rural or urban area, a summer recreation service relies on the same skills and expertise. The same services could be offered. In rural areas, we need high school students as well as Cegep and university students.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mathieu.

I now turn the floor over to Ms. Gagnon. You have seven minutes.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** I'm not going to use it all. I'll ask an initial question, then turn the floor over to my colleague.

Mr. Vigeant, I appreciated your comment. You raised an important issue concerning the downtown areas that offer a large number of positions in community networks. Despite the increase in the regional budget, it isn't the major centres that offer a range of cultural internships. There you find a concentration of cultural and hospital events, among other things. Here I'm talking about the Quebec City region.

For my part, my budget has been cut by \$37,000 to \$40,000. I'm already turning down a large number of internships. This year, because of the redistribution of electoral districts, the suburbs have been favoured. I'm not insinuating here that their budgets should be cut. However, I see that virtually all internship applications were accepted in Charlesbourg and Beauport. In some cases, there were no rejections. In Quebec City, we were forced to reject 35 to 40 internships. That's a bit disappointing. In the program, there is one criterion concerning students who live in their ridings, but there's also the unemployment rate.

Could we add another criterion that would take into account the situation of the community and the supply of internships in the social, cultural and health environment?

• (1140)

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I think that's entirely necessary. Otherwise, a strong trend develops, as is the case in the rural communities. They say it's the most economically disadvantaged communities that will suffer from the situation. As is the case in the rural communities, there are fewer young people. I don't know how all that could take shape. You can't feel you've hit the jackpot simply because a large number of young people means you can establish an educational institution, for example. At least that's what we're seeing right now.

You mentioned Charlesbourg and Beauport in the context of the redistribution of the electoral map. As a result of that, part of Quebec City, Limoilou, for example, which is also a disadvantaged area, is now part of Beauport. It benefited from that redistribution. However, in the downtown neighbourhoods of Quebec City, where the needs are obvious and community action is significant, you can't use the number of youths as the only criterion. You also have to see what the needs are and how community organizations are concentrated. Perhaps the kind of organizations in the community should be taken into account in order to ease or raise funding criteria.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Thank you. I'll now turn the floor over to my colleague.

**The Chair:** All right.

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Good morning. Thank you for being here with us. I'm going to talk to you about applications.

We've asked the government that the applications be submitted in January and that they be forwarded electronically, that is to say by e-mail.

Are you in favour of that idea? Could January be an inopportune time for you, or would you prefer that the applications be filed as early as possible? We know there are students in April and May. Education levels higher than high school are increasingly in demand. Would January be too early for you? Would the electronic route be too complicated? Do you have any comments on the subject?

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** All this is increasingly complex. We also handle summer recreation and it's increasingly difficult for us to ask youths 16 to 20 years of age to work with young people in families and with the families themselves.

So this requires training and support. As the other lady mentioned, we have every interest in that being done as early as possible. The community centre system is quite organized. It wouldn't be a problem to have that done electronically starting in January. Actually, in January, the community centres are already planning for the summer.

Incidentally, this year was the first time we didn't receive the documents and forms by mail. In one instance, that resulted in one person missing the deadline by one day because that person was used to receiving the forms directly at home. These applications must be backed by a serious information mechanism.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Do you want to ask someone else a question, Ms. Bonsant?

**Ms. France Bonsant:** No, I'll wait for the five-minute round.

**The Chair:** You still have some time left.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** All right.

You touched on one subject, and I'd like to go back to it. That was training.

Ms. Mathieu, you talked about training that, it's true, is increasingly intended for specific people. Last week, some people even told me that certain types of training were being given on a volunteer basis because people couldn't afford to pay for it.

What do you have to say about training?

• (1145)

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** With regard to training, I'll repeat what Mr. Vigeant said. Children who have problems at school during the school year are taken care of. They have psychological, nursing services and so on. CLSC community organizers are sometimes involved as well. Those resources disappear in the summer.

As was said, high school students who are 15 or 16 years old are hired. Time absolutely has to be allotted for training. Back home right now, we're talking about 24 hours of training. The first day is devoted to theoretical training and facilitation. They learn games during the second day, and the last day is set aside for learning first aid. This is basic training, really minimum training, and it does not necessarily meet current needs. We increasingly have to expand child intervention. We're currently looking for solutions and trying various things. We want to offer a full weekend of training. That would enable us to have community organizers and psychologists as partners. They would meet with the youths to better equip them to work with young people, who are experiencing increasing problems. We're seeing a significant rise in problems.

Training like that enables us to work with youths and explain to them what their summer job will be. They don't know. At 15 or 16 years of age, you don't know about the working world; you enter it without being supervised.

A rural community is a volunteer environment. The volunteers are parents. They're not necessarily able to supervise facilitators, although they know their own children. So we need outside help. We're trying hard to provide supervision, but we have limits.

You're offering only six weeks in the Summer Career Placement Program. The salary for those six weeks is paid for the period when children are at day camp. So when facilitators are in training, it costs nothing, but the facilitators aren't being paid to take it. Unfortunately, facilitators have to report for training in the morning on a volunteer basis. That's why we hear it said that a youth was trained and that he was a volunteer. The youths aren't paid when they receive their training. That's a problem.

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

I now turn the floor over to Mr. Martin.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Thanks for coming this morning.

This is an issue that has affected all of our ridings, I believe, across the country, particularly northern, rural, and remote areas. We're always desperately looking for resources to do a number of things: improve our economy, keep our young people at home, attract them back, and give our young people who go to university or college and students in high school, those who want to make some money to put aside to further their education, an opportunity to come back and work in the summertime when they are able to do that.

We know that over the last few years, with the reduction in the amount of support that remote and rural and northern areas get from senior levels of government because of the cutbacks and down-loading, which makes it even more difficult for local governments to contribute, areas like yours and mine have struggled to provide the opportunities. We know that the cost of education has risen quite dramatically over the last few years as well, so we have a huge challenge, and it's difficult to deal with it.



There were comments made in previous sessions, particularly by the government members who came before us, that the summer employment program is not an economic development program, but for many of us it's all economic development. Any resources we can get or any ability to keep young people, with their talents and their skills, at home and contributing is all about developing the economy of our regions. As some of you indicated, we saw a significant reduction in the amount of money we got this year for student employment. Because of that, we weren't able to do as much as we would have liked to both bring our young people home again and stop the out-migration of youth.

From your experience, what would you suggest to us this morning would be the best thing for us to do or recommend to the government in terms of those kinds of challenges? If you were the government and you were making decisions as to what you would do with the summer youth employment program, what would you do in light of those challenges?

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Is your question addressed to anyone in particular, Mr. Martin?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** No, it's for anyone who feels they want to respond.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Does anyone want to answer Mr. Martin's question?

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I can tell you about a few ideas on the subject. I'd say this program is important to the extent that all community organizations must have resources in order to meet the needs of the public. This is one more way to offer youths meaningful work experience. You ask us what we could do. I think that, if priority is given to this program, you have to allocate the necessary funds to it and take into account the situation of all those living in rural communities.

For downtown neighbourhoods, you have to rethink the existing criteria and see how new criteria could be applied. When the minimum wage rises, for example, the budget envelope is automatically expanded. However, it doesn't have any more impact. For the organizations, it may mean an additional \$150 a week. They don't get any more weeks. In order to make this program achieve its full potential, I think you have to look at things in a more general perspective, including youth migration, work experience in a community environment, and so on.

**The Chair:** Does anyone want to add anything?

Ms. Mathieu.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** In the Eastern Townships, we do a lot of work through joint action, and we establish regional strategies. I get the impression that things are sort of done that way across Canada. I think it's important that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development designate and meet people in each of the regions. The regional conferences of elected representatives are in every Quebec region. Perhaps it should be determined to what sectors and what levels the money should be allocated.

You have to consider the number of youths, but that must not be the only criterion. Others must be added. Many studies have been conducted on the subject, and whether or not a community is

becoming poor is determined on the basis of a number of factors. The same is true in evaluating quality of life. That all exists in written form. Perhaps it would be a good idea to meet with the professors who deal with the way a community is analyzed. That might lead us to consider new factors in relation to criteria for allocating the budget envelope.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Would someone else like to speak?

You have one minute left, Mr. Martin.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Martin:** On the issue of youth out-migration, is the summer employment program a good vehicle to respond to that reality in your particular area?

**The Chair:** Does anyone wish to answer?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mathieu.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** I've always dreamed of this kind of thing. I worked at the Youth Forum, and, in 1990, one student conducted a study in the RCM Haut-Saint-François, which is part of Ms. Bonsant's riding. That student referred precisely to the youth migration. For youths, work is the main reason for going and settling somewhere. Generally, you live in a place for work reasons.

The second reason is quality of life, that is to say the community, the kind of life people who live there, and so on. The Summer Career Placement Program would be the best way to show young people that they are the future, that they can work in their home region and contribute to development.

• (1155)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being with us this afternoon. I particularly want to say hello to Johanne, who comes from my home town, Edmundston. I've very pleased that Johanne is here to talk about the situation regarding the Summer Career Placement Program. Over the years, we have been involved in various organizations. My first question concerns Edmundston, but I have no objection to everyone subsequently answering it.

As regards the situation of non-profit organizations, we know that most of the festivals and organizations in our riding are in quite serious need of assistance in order to carry out their plans during the year, mainly during the summer.

Johanne, I'd like to know what impact do you think the Summer Career Placement Program has on non-profit organizations like the festivals. Of course, you have to consider the positive factors. However, to understand the importance of this program, we also have to emphasize the negative consequences if the program were amended or abolished for one reason or another.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** It would be a disaster if the program were completely abolished. There's a range of festivals in the Edmundston region, and only one of them has a full-time employee. All other employees assigned to those festivals come from student employment programs. That's extremely important.

In the case of attractions and other sites, museums, historic sites, the New Brunswick botanical gardens and many others, without the contribution of students during the summer, their season would be vastly shortened in that they would only be able to be open for very few weeks. As for the festivals, it would be very difficult to keep our active volunteers. It's already very hard to organize festivals. The Edmundston Jazz and Blues Festival — which is provincial in scope — brings 15,000 people together over four days every summer. It has significant economic impact. If it relied solely on contributions from volunteers, we'd lose their involvement over the long term. We get a boost when student projects are announced. Volunteers see that they'll finally have some help. It's always very hard to work on a project for 11 or 12 months. In the tenth month, the announcement of student projects means that we'll be getting support. That gives people their second wind.

Community and volunteer organizations really need these programs in order to survive and remain viable. For us, there would be additional costs. In our little communities, the events find it hard to finance themselves. If they also had to pay full salaries for administrative or organizational support that student projects provide for us, it would be very difficult.

This makes a significant contribution to bringing people back to our region. As I said, most of these young people study elsewhere. When we can bring them back through student projects, we're bringing expertise back to our region. That also makes it possible to get a lot of people involved in those organizations.

Last summer, we worked with one young student. If he came back tomorrow, three or four businesses would hire him because they saw him at work during the festival. This is a young student in whom people have already seen potential. They'd be prepared to recruit him because they observed his skills in the student festival organization projects.

• (1200)

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** I'd like to address the expertise issue that you've discussed in other meetings with other witnesses. In your view, is the labour market experience these young people acquire positive? Are we able to prepare them properly and, consequently, to increase their chances of entering the labour market once they've completed their undergraduate or technical education?

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** These are very enriching experiences. As I said, if we only work with young people for six weeks and get the project three weeks before the festival starts, we don't have the time to give them essential training that will enrich their experience. But working with volunteer organizations definitely gives these youths tools for the working world. They have to be very independent and develop supervision skills. Sometimes we almost even make them manage because they really become our right-hand people. That enables them to acquire even more enriching experience. The number of weeks definitely counts in the experience we can give them. It's important that they be with us earlier, not later, so that they can get certain types of training. These young people acquire a lot of experience by being around people involved in the volunteer sector. There you meet people from all sectors, and it's important for these youths, in terms of experience, to network with business people.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

[English]

We're into a round of five minutes.

Mr. Komarnicki

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Right on, Madam Chair...

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Those questions are more for the Gomery Commission.

[English]

**The Chair:** We're looking at how to spend money, Mr. Komarnicki.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** I appreciate that.

My question, to any of the witnesses prepared to answer it, relates specifically to the urban migration, which is an obvious fact of life, particularly in provinces such as Saskatchewan. I come from a rural constituency that, based on the formula here, lost essentially \$190,000 of \$290,000 in potential funding for students.

I'm wondering if anyone has done any work or study in terms of empirical evidence of the numbers of students in your specific areas who might have migrated to urban centres and who do not come back for the summer to their homes—where their parents are, where the community is. If you can give me some idea of any practical information you have in that regard, I'd appreciate it.

Second, what are your views of the formula, which has two main facets in it? One is that the number of resident students in the area might be changed to account for the smaller communities, which we know actually lose students to larger centres. The second aspect of it, the other issue, is unemployment rates in the community. We may find that some communities, like mine, may have reasonably good employment rates due to other factors, but not for students. That negatively impacts.

There are two questions: do you have any empirical evidence, and do you have any suggestions for how the formula might be changed to allow for better student placement in rural centres?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you. I believe the question is for Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I don't have the figures right now, but I know a study was done in our region on youth migration to the bigger cities. It's a document I can send you if you want a copy. I know that being able to offer well-paid student jobs in our regions has an impact. Last summer, some small communities around Edmundston had trouble finding young people to fill jobs. When you offer a six-week job, compared to 10 weeks in another municipality, students definitely consider the number of weeks and the number of hours. It think it's important to consider the rural communities so that we can offer a program that meets the needs of young people and of the organizations that hire them.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé-Gagné, I wonder whether you could send that document to our clerk, who will distribute it to the members of this committee.

[English]

You still have some time, Mr. Komarnicki.

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Does anyone else have any input in respect to the evidence of migration or the numbers?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Vigeant.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I have a little additional information. In Quebec, there's a very important research group on youth migration. I can't provide you with very specific figures on the number of young people. We see it in the perception we currently have. So there's a multidisciplinary research group in Quebec working on youth migration, and I'm sure it would be able to inform the committee and provide it with food for thought on this issue.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

You still have a bit of time, Mr. Komarnicki.

I put my name on the list.

[Translation]

I'd like to ask Ms. Durand a question first. I believe that, in your presentation, you referred to the fact that you had a 41-year-old candidate. I imagine that must happen virtually everywhere, that is that you have candidates who fall through the cracks because someone somewhere didn't notice that person wasn't the right age. I wonder how you dealt with that.

**Mrs. Nathalie Durand:** It happened last year, and we were reimbursed. This year, however, Human Resources Canada simply denied us, even though we hadn't been able to use the entire project budget that had been allocated to us. We were simply denied.

In view of the date when we receive the projects, we obviously start our recruitment a little earlier. However, when we start really recruiting people, the youngest students have already found jobs. So we often wind up with people who are a little older.

**The Chair:** My other question is mainly for Mr. Vigeant.

When I heard your presentation, it reminded me of the Montreal Island School Board, which, when it was still in existence, prepared a poverty map of Montreal every year or every other year.

Would there perhaps be some way of using that kind of map, not necessarily just for Montreal, but perhaps in various rural and urban communities, since poverty doesn't just occur in urban communities? Could that be the kind of criterion you referred to earlier, where we could review not only the number of young people, but also the socio-economic situation of their families and those in rural and urban communities.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** Yes, it would be very appropriate to do that, based on that assumption. I hadn't thought of that one in particular, in terms of a community poverty indicator. I think it would be very well received. However, I had thought more about the concentration of community organizations, but I think these are similar things.

**The Chair:** They do somewhat amount to the same thing.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I think it would be entirely welcome to take that into consideration.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** I'd like to say something on this point.

**The Chair:** You're encroaching on my time, Ms. Gagnon.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Yes, but I'll give you a little more.

In fact, we also see that, in the downtown neighbourhoods, the people who conduct social studies can't get their bearings, in, for example, the Saint-Jean-Baptiste neighbourhood, which is one of the downtown sectors. We really have to go far in our study of the social component in the neighbourhoods where there are more poor people and a lot of social stakeholders.

• (1210)

**The Chair:** This kind of map is easy to do, since I've previously seen it done.

I'd also like to ask Ms. Mathieu a question. I'd like your answer to be brief.

I got the impression in your presentation that there were a certain number of cases in which people — not necessarily you, but other organizations — asked youths to perform duties that perhaps weren't appropriate, given their age and life experience. For example, I'm talking about duties requiring expertise in psychology or in the social field.

Am I mistaken?

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** Indeed, in a summer recreation service, you wind up with children who are experiencing divorce or violence. A 15-year-old youth may be greeting a bruised child. At that point, the child may confide in him.

**The Chair:** However, he doesn't treat the child; he refers him.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** He'll refer him. In fact, the youth doesn't necessarily know who to refer the child to. My organization does a lot of work to establish contacts and make connections so that these kinds of responsibilities are not borne by these youths.

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

I now turn the floor over to Ms. Bonsant. You have five minutes.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** My question has a number of parts, since you touch on everything. You touched on tourism and other things.

Personally, when I travelled around my riding to meet the organizations, I heard a number of comments. I also want to hear yours concerning hourly wages. Some turned down a job because, since they were specific jobs, they had to travel 60 kilometres round-trip. At \$1.47 for a litre of gasoline, the wage wasn't very high. I want to know whether you've had problems in that regard.

My question now is for Ms. Bérubé-Gagné and it concerns tourism. What do you think about flextime and not working 30 hours a week from June to September, but rather from May to October, since tourism continues on the weekends?

I'd like to hear everyone's comments on this.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** As regards tourism, employees should of course be offered flexible work schedules. It's true that the programs limit us somewhat in this regard. However, to date, we've always been able to deal with the situation.

Sometimes students tell us they don't want to work on weekends. It turns out in those cases that they aren't in the right field. In the tourism sector, variable work schedules are a frequent feature. The two days off each week can be Wednesday and Thursday, instead of Saturday and Sunday. We try to be flexible and to respect those people. It's not easy to work all the weekends in summer; that's why we don't require our employees to do it.

This field obviously requires a certain amount of flexibility. The young people in it aren't all prepared when they enter the labour market. We've had trouble filling positions because the available students weren't as flexible as we had hoped. You also have to consider the commuting issue. We offer a travel allowance. The Edmundston Madawaska Tourism Office serves a region that covers a number of square kilometres. So we offer a travel allowance, and that's taken out of our budgets. This is a fact we have to deal with in the tourism industry.

We do quite well all the same. However, losing all our students in the third week of August causes a problem. Some of our infrastructures are open until October, and then we have to continue operations relying solely on volunteers. This becomes a very heavy burden for these organizations. The situation is the same in May. The attractions start in early May, but students begin working in the third week of June. In many cases they haven't been able to take the training or join the permanent team already in place. It's hard to integrate them in the third week of June, in the middle of the tourist season. Things would be much easier to do in May, when activities are slower. We'd have the time to give them training and get them used to the environment and structure.

•(1215)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Does anyone want to speak? Ms. Bourassa?

Pardon me, Madam Chair, I'm asking Ms. Bourassa whether she wants to speak.

**The Chair:** You have some time left.

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa:** I'm going to address the wage issue. Many organizations offer compensation in order to provide youths with what is nevertheless a satisfactory wage. Those who don't often present these positions to students as work experience in their field of study. They tell them, for example, that they would be earning minimum wage as salespersons in a store, whereas, in this situation, they'll have the advantage of working in their field. It often happens that an excellent candidate from a JCP is offered a permanent position one or two years later.

**The Chair:** Thank you. I now turn the floor over to Ms. Bakopanos.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank all those who have taken the time to come here today. We're discussing a program that I consider very important for my riding. I'd also like to thank Linda for being with us. This is the first time she's appeared before a committee.

First of all, I'd like to know whether, in the context of this program, there have been administrative problems with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. I don't think that's the case in my riding. I meet with officials in September to examine the program and the problems that have arisen. The deadline is brought up every time. I'd like it to be later than January, say in September, for the organizations that are already in the system. Those that have proven themselves should receive their funding immediately. I've been advocating this idea for a long time now. In that way, the answer would be known in January. That would give officials and members time. In the case of my riding, the demand is rising every year. That's also the case in the private sector.

As regards administration, first I'd like to know what relations and type of communication your organization has with local officials. Then I'd like to talk about the priority given to certain clientele. I asked Linda Bourassa to come here today because, among other reasons, the Table de concertation jeunesse Ahuntsic does a lot of work with visible minorities. I think this is a very vulnerable clientele that requires organizations with slightly more resources and additional supervisory effort.

Should priority be given to regional projects? For example, *La popote roulante* in Montreal has submitted a regional project. Committee members will have the opportunity to discuss it. It doesn't involve just one riding. To meet its needs, that organization is required under program rules to make a number of applications to a number of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada offices. I believe priority should also be given to regional projects.

Linda, perhaps you'd like to speak on the subject of visible minorities?

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa:** There is a lot of talk about regions and rural areas. Those of us who work in urban neighbourhoods experience the inflow of young people, particularly in summer. So that means crime, delinquency and homelessness.

As a community organization, we have to deal with the situation and set up projects. Summer is the time when the largest number of things happen for young people. They're not at school; they're free. If they don't have any plans, if we can't manage to get them and involve them in projects, the crime rate increases, with all that entails.

Montreal is a very multi-ethnic city. We won't deny that all the problems related to street gangs can be found there. That's why, as a community organization, we try to set up as many projects as possible relating to the needs and interests of youths. They have to do something else.

When they're busy, they obviously don't think about loitering in a park. If the youth centre is open longer, in terms of hours and days per week, as a result of larger staffs in summer, we avoid problems. It's a matter of prevention.

**The Chair:** Who will answer Ms. Bakopanos' questions?

Mr. Vigeant, over to you.

• (1220)

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I don't know whether it's because of the poverty rate, but you have to consider the social situation of each of the communities.

I'd like to go back to the regional envelopes. The Fédération québécoise des centres communautaires de loisir is a provincial organization. I don't know whether a portion of the envelope should be allocated to this situation. I think that would be good, in order to prevent people from filing 10 or 12 applications in different ridings or to prevent those projects from competing with each other. There are local needs. Our philosophy has always been not to rob Peter to pay Paul. By that expression, I ultimately mean that this shouldn't be done to the detriment of existing local projects. We see the needs of the organizations: you yourself referred to that. The needs are growing and demand is increasing day by day.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm going to stop there, Ms. Bakopanos. I'll come back to you later on in the meeting.

Mr. Martin, over to you.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I want to follow up on this notion of summer employment being more than simply jobs for students, although at its centre it is that, and of the economic development that sometimes is facilitated or helped along in a particularly challenged region.

In my own community I not only heard from students who weren't able to get jobs because the funding was cut, but I also heard from small businesses and not-for-profit organizations that, because of the difficult economy in our area, were looking at this as a way to supplement their being able to have a program or offer their service. In some instances it was tourism, which in certain cases isn't a very

lucrative business at the best of times. So those businesses and those not-for-profits were affected as well.

Were there any examples from your area of businesses or not-for-profits who shared with you that they were impacted negatively by the reduction this year in the funding for the summer program?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Who wants to answer the question?

Ms. Mathieu, over to you.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** There have been negative reactions. Some summer recreation services have wondered whether they would offer services to their citizens. That means that they were perhaps going to refuse entirely. Some had to close, but perhaps not this year. I'm preparing a report for this year. Some services had to close because no more money was coming in; there was nothing. The municipality then makes an agreement with the neighbouring municipality so that the parents can travel and drive their children. So it's the neighbouring municipality that inherits the attraction. Since it's often the only recreation service and it's just collapsed, everything follows. When there are cuts, there's direct impact.

On the last page of the report that was submitted to you, you can see the consequences: 11 percent of respondents had to close their service: not necessarily the summer recreation service, but their service. This study concerns the Eastern Townships. There are also other subjects: an anticipated cut for next year, increased responsibilities, cuts in equipment purchases, an anticipated deficit, increased investment by the municipality that the municipality had not provided for in its budget. The municipalities are passing their budgets now.

The community environment and the non-profit organizations also have to conduct self-financing activities, since they have so few funding resources and there are no programs that they can implement. Our resources are limited, and we want to offer a service to the community. So we have to conduct funding activities. In the meantime, we're not carrying out our mission. It's set aside, and we put all our energy into funding activities. It's exhausting. It requires a lot of volunteers. We have two permanent employees, and 10 volunteers lend us a hand. While we're doing funding, we're not carrying out our mission and we're not helping our community.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** You still have a little time left, Mr. Martin.

[English]

You have one minute left. That's fine? Thank you.

So I'll go back to Madame Bakopanos, and I believe you'll be sharing your time with Mr. Adams.

Madame Bakopanos.

[Translation]

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Going back to my first question, which concerns program management, tell me briefly whether things are going well or whether there are any problems. The purpose of our study is to determine whether there are any problems in relations between the organizations and the local offices. I believe you all talked about resources.

I also want to go back to the question of which clientele should be given priority. It's often said that poverty, visible minorities and persons with disabilities could be criteria. We received the brief of a group that works with children with disabilities. They obviously have different problems. Should those criteria be considered?

Who wants to answer my first question?

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** We talked about regional projects and the possibility of member working together. That exchange should be facilitated. I won't talk about it, but, in the Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean region, an experiment is under way involving four or five members. This incredible project has managed to solve a major problem for summer recreation services. All contact information has been submitted to France Bonsant. Perhaps you could study this entire project. It's an excellent joint effort by members. As soon as the municipality joins the program, it becomes a major support for supervising summer facilitators, which is done by an organization that hires coordinators. They've received training from Human Resources officials in completing applications and reports. Everyone comes out ahead. The officials' papers are properly completed, and the objectives of the Summer Career Placement Program are met. If you're looking for a success story, look at what's being done in the Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean summer program.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** I started a similar project for bike patrols in Montreal parks, together with the police and various members from Montreal Island. A portion of the Summer Career Placement Program is paid for out of our member budgets.

Does anyone else want to answer? Time's running out, unfortunately. Ms. Durand?

**Mrs. Nathalie Durand:** I'll be very brief. Our relations with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada are excellent. We have no problems on our side.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bourassa.

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa:** As regards clientele priority, I'm definitely going to speak for my own bailiwick. Young people have priority in my mind. I don't think that targeting, labelling or talking about visible minorities or persons with disabilities is a good thing. On the whole, young people all have needs. It's up to us, as an organization, to ensure those needs are met.

However, I see a danger in labelling. If we talk about visible minorities — the clientele is changing — in one given year, 80 percent of the clientele may be visible minorities and, the next year, there may be 20 percent. How do we justify not meeting the criterion this year, then meeting it next year? It becomes a bit complex. I think that young people are young people.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** It's up to the organizations to decide?

**Ms. Linda Bourassa:** Yes.

**The Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Isn't there some question of giving priority to available resources? That's my question. It's already been said that we don't have unlimited resources, and that's what we have to examine. In any case, we'll have an opportunity to come back to this question.

**Mrs. Linda Bourassa:** Young people all have various problems, regardless of their ethnic group. They all have to deal with problems such as dropping out, regardless of ethnic origin. They can also have family problems. So I don't think that giving priority to something that specific would facilitate matters.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Bérubé-Gagné, do you want to add anything?

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I'd simply like to add that we're working very well with this committee and with Human Resources Canada. The only problem the Tourism Office has to deal with is when we manage various sites and give our support to various organizations.

Last year, for example, I completed three applications for three different organizations. However, since my name was on the bottom of the form, someone called me to say that he was giving a single amount of money to the Tourism Office and asked me to divide it among the three organizations. In fact, we managed to find a response for these three organizations that had needs because I filed the application. However, this shouldn't be harmful in a case in which an organization provides support or, in our case, plays a regional role. Organizations shouldn't be penalized if an application comes from a single office for assistance for a number of organizations. I don't know whether you understand my answer. I think it's important that there be good cooperation between the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and organizations that play a regional or a slightly broader role.

● (1230)

**The Chair:** We're now on the third round, in which each member will have five minutes.

Mr. Devolin, over to you.

[English]

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** My colleagues—

**The Chair:** It's hard to switch subjects, Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** —are commenting on my reading matter today. It is fascinating.

But I do have a question—

**The Chair:** There's nothing new in it, Mr. Devolin, that you haven't heard before.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** That's true.

We heard from several witnesses—not just witnesses today, but on other days we've heard this from witnesses—that one of the problems with the program is that it's limited to 10 weeks and that there are students who are looking for positions for 14, or 16, or 18 weeks because that is the length of their summer break. One recommendation that came forward last week was that the eligibility rules be changed so that assistance could be given to students for periods more than 10 weeks long.

My question, for those of you who deal with the program regularly, is how common is it that an organization, possibly a not-for-profit, needs somebody for 14 or 16 weeks? They recognize that the funding supplement is only available for 10 weeks, and so they employ the supplement for those 10 weeks, and then carry the entire cost for the rest of the term that they need somebody. Are there employers who view this as a fixed amount of dollars available, and then make a decision to keep the thing going for more than 10 weeks? Or, in your experience, do employers cease employment usually when the wage subsidy ends?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Would someone like to answer that question?

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I would only like to talk about the experience we've had here. Very few 10-week projects are allocated in the region; they last six or eight weeks.

In both cases, we sometimes experience both situations. Some tourism businesses have had to close sooner once the student program ends, while others have had to find partners in order to continue the service for the necessary number of weeks.

The greater the need, the more the partners are strained by the demand.

As I mentioned earlier, most of the organizations in the region, whether it be festivals or tourist sites, need these programs in order to operate their business. In some situations, they necessarily reduce the number of hours of service in order to adjust to student programs, since additional revenue is not always there or isn't available when they need it.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci.

You still have some time, Mr. Devolin.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Does anyone else want to answer that?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Vigeant.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** In 20 years, I've never seen one project last 10 weeks. They're always eight weeks long. Now they in fact last six weeks rather than eight weeks in the field.

Often, especially because recreation programming and facilitation and so on are planned, organizations that have other activities make arrangements to assume the deficit of this program for the person, because of the need. When we request it for 14 weeks, it's really for 14 weeks. So we've learned to juggle this and to anticipate accordingly that the program should last six to eight weeks.

•(1235)

**The Chair:** If I understood correctly, organizations request 12 when they need 10.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** No. The fact is that we now know the answer, that is to say that it will be approximately six or eight weeks.

**The Chair:** That's it. Thank you.

Ms. Adams.

[English]

You have five minutes.

**Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think Tony Martin suggested that the program decreased, but of course it didn't; it increased. But there was a redistribution between the ridings, and where there was a decrease in a riding, that was limited to 30%. The attempt was made to reduce the impact of the change in funding, and all that was based on the census, because about every 10 years there's a big census, and I think what we try to do is target the program better, as well as we can.

I'd like to talk about the rural areas, although I think this applies to the inner cities as well. It seems to me we have a problem, so our objective in the rural areas is to target the program as well as possible. So you have the distribution of population and you have the distribution of student population, and the students mainly go to school in the larger centres, leaving the rural areas. If you look at the demography of the rural areas, the decline in students is faster than the increase in seniors, by far. It is the most notable demographic trend in rural areas, and we're targeting students here.

Now, I really want to ask your advice again—and it's circular, by the way. What happens is that the number of elementary and high school students goes down, so you close one of their schools. That causes people not to settle in the rural area, because the school is closed, so the number of students goes down even more. I think you understand. It's a circular problem, and the problem with this program is circular as well, because when our young people go to college or go to university from our rural areas like New Brunswick, they don't show up in their home areas anymore, and yet we're trying to target the program in those areas.

So in some ways, by the way, by targeting it where the students are now, we are making the situation worse, if you understand what I'm saying, in the rural areas.

I wonder if you have any advice.

Pierre, I think you said in another context, to focus part of the funding. Another suggestion we've had is a greater emphasis on high school students, perhaps, in rural areas as compared to college and university students. Have you any ideas? We have to keep reorganizing the program and we badly want to strengthen it and we badly want to strengthen it in rural areas, so I'd welcome your comments. How could we better target this program, which most people agree is good?

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I don't know how we could do better. Let's take the festivals and events, for example, where a number have to deal with the issue of serving alcoholic beverages. There was one year when we only had high school students working. They weren't able to help us in areas where we needed them, since they didn't meet the criteria for the alcohol licence. However, I understand that this kind of thing is part of the circumstances of any festival or event.

Similarly, if people are 16 or 17, some security situations are extremely difficult. However, in other tourist sectors, these people are welcome. An enriching experience for them can easily be created. We had a specific situation at one festival, where it was quite hard to optimize the time that these people were able to give us in the context of the duties that we could assign them.

**Mr. Pierre Vigeant:** I agree with Ms. Bérubé-Gagné. The number of projects of each of the organizations is so small relative to the number of jobs. Resource needs at the community centres are so great that we unfortunately can no longer consider giving priority to high school students. We're looking more for people who at least have some training, and since there are fewer and fewer resources to supervise and train these people, they have to come in with some training.

• (1240)

[English]

**The Chair:** Monsieur Adams, please.

**Hon. Peter Adams:** Madam Chair, I know it sounds a bit cynical, but what about using the numbers of grade 11 and 12 high school students in the calculation of the allocation of the funds?

It's cynical because, in the two cases that you've actually given, it's not easy to hire them, but I suspect that you could hire them in some areas. You see my point. There would then be more jobs, and the students who have gone away might come back because there are more jobs in the local area.

I don't know if you have any thoughts on that. It's a different point. Do you understand? It's on how you calculate the money that's going to come to a particular region.

**The Chair:** Before I let Madame Bérubé-Gagné or anyone else answer, I would advise Mr. Adams that the program is in fact meant to include young people from 15 to 24 years old, which means that they would at least be in grade 10 and grade 11. That is already included.

Did you want to reformulate your question, just in case?

**Hon. Peter Adams:** No. By the way, I assume you all heard that.

Going back to my remark about focusing the money, the question would then be on whether the high school students in rural areas should be given greater weight in the calculation. I'm trying to think of a way that would be fair and that everybody would know about. It would be a formula that would allow us to cut into this circle that I've described in the rural areas.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé-Gagné.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** That could be one way of doing the calculation. However, if New Brunswick were allocated funds based on the number of high school students, the southern regions would get more than the northern regions. I don't think that would work to our advantage. The current age limit is 24. If we raised the limit, that might help us, since a number of universities have students over 24 years of age.

**The Chair:** There are two important points: the rural regions and the poor downtown areas. I think we should consider both elements,

the regions and the needs. As the saying goes, one size does not fit all. So perhaps that's what we should focus on more.

[English]

Mr. Adams, do you want to add another word?

**Hon. Peter Adams:** Madam Chair, I only wanted to thank you.

If you have any ideas on that... I know you have terrible day-to-day problems, and you've got to deal with your own programs, but if we're going to improve this in a general way for rural areas and in the city areas, Madam Chair, we have to improve the way the money is allocated.

I'd leave it with you. If you have anything, just let the clerk know.

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

We have a bit of time left, if anybody wants to bring any other short questions. We do have some time.

On a point of order, Madame Bakopanos.

[Translation]

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Ms. Mathieu spoke about the project, and she has already given a copy to Ms. Bonsant. Ms. Mathieu, could you send the document on the regional project to the clerk so that each of us can have a copy?

I didn't think to have the document on the Montreal project sent to us. It's an excellent project that is producing very positive results for youths who want to become police officers. I'd like to have a copy, as would all other committee members.

**The Chair:** That's it: send it to the clerk. Ms. Bérubé-Gagné, I think I've already mentioned that you could send the document we referred to.

We're going to do a final round for those who are interested. I would ask you to ask fairly brief questions and, I hope, to give fairly brief answers as well.

Ms. Bonsant, over to you.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** I listened to what was said. I thought about the resources of the rural world and disadvantaged towns. You have to be careful. Young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods have come to us, in my riding. Those young people were really lost; they had never left their neighbourhood. When they arrived on a farm, they saw that there were no buildings, no lights, no traffic. The 12 youths slept in the same bedroom because they were all afraid. It was a multicultural group; there were blacks from Africa, Arabs and so on.

Would it be possible, as Mr. Adams said, to consider high school students? However, you have to be careful because there aren't a lot of high school students in rural areas. High schools are mainly in downtown areas.

Instead I'd like to know whether you want to develop rural municipalities. When recreation isn't developed, families don't stay. To bring youths back into a rural community, you should focus more on recreation and culture. Perhaps we could agree with the cities, ask them for a bank of names, propose choices and aim for certain achievements in order to eliminate the doughnut effect. This is what happens when everyone leaves rural areas to go into urban areas...



•(1245)

**The Chair:** Pardon me, Ms. Bonsant, but we weren't talking about sending people away from rural areas to towns or vice versa.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** No, that happens automatically. In small municipalities, there are only primary schools; there are no secondary schools. Mr. Adams said they were being closed.

To address this situation and to keep youths coming from the towns to the rural areas — we have about 110 back home — we need the Summer Career Placement Program. That's its purpose. Perhaps the Summer Career Placement Program was created in order to help them. I don't want to confuse the issue of the underfunding of committees with that of the use of the Summer Career Placement Program to keep families in rural areas. The idea is to find a way, the simplest solution possible. Without penalizing anyone, that should be done in rural areas and in urban areas.

**The Chair:** To add to what Ms. Bonsant just said, I've often noticed, based on my experience, that the people who have a problem are often the ones who have potential solutions. We're not trying to transfer the problem to you. That's not at all what Ms. Bonsant or Mr. Adams meant. However, people who have a problem have ideas for solving it. I believe that's what Ms. Bonsant meant.

Do you want to react to those comments?

**Ms. France Bonsant:** You're right, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Bérubé-Gagné, over to you.

**Mrs. Johanne Bérubé-Gagné:** I can only make a suggestion. You also have to think about long-term planning. When the organizations file an application for 2006, for example, they should provide an overview of their needs for 2007 or 2008. That might enable the program to adjust. Let's take the example of our region. There is a tourism plan spread over three years. I know perfectly well that, in the next three years, there will be increased demand for this type of program. We want to develop certain aspects: new attractions, new sites in small localities, etc. However, if the organization could provide an overview of the kind of human resources needs anticipated, that might enable the program to adjust

from year to year and to avoid taking away from one to give to another. Gradual increases could then be planned.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

Ms. Mathieu, over to you.

**Mrs. Geneviève Mathieu:** Perhaps we could also include some participation by the municipality, based on its ability to pay. We could rely on certain criteria such as its level of indebtedness. Let's take the example of Scotstown. That municipality has a major water problem. It has just received funding in order to try to solve it. People have trouble getting drinking water, but they've nevertheless decided to have a summer recreation service. They requested the money to hire four facilitators, but only received the money to hire one. That affects the municipality considerably because it is unable to pay. As regards municipal involvement, perhaps we could consider the financial capability of the communities.

**The Chair:** That's always a delicate subject, particularly when you live in Quebec.

I'd like to thank all the participants. Ms. Bérubé-Gagné, thank you for coming from so far away. I assure you that your message was very clearly received. I'd like to thank Ms. Mathieu, Ms. Durand, Mr. Vigeant and Ms. Bourassa. We've received a very clear overview from the four corners of the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick, in particular the Edmundston-Madawaska region. Thank you for that.

I would like to remind committee members that they have the English and French versions of the document from Mr. Donat Lavallée, from the AQEPA Montreal region. We've also received answers from the department to a number of questions we asked it. We will make copies and send them to your offices.

The committee's next meeting will be on Thursday, at 11:00 a.m. We'll be hearing from the officials of Statistics Canada and perhaps a person from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

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