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

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**

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

Friday, October 27, 2006

•(1010)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108 (2), it is our study on employability in Canada.

I would like to take this time to thank everyone for being here today. Some of you probably are aware, or may not be aware, that we've been travelling across this country dealing with issues of employability. We were in Newfoundland, Halifax, and Montreal; for the last two days we've been here in Toronto. We'll be heading out west to Vancouver, Calgary, and Saskatoon sometime in November.

We want to thank each and every one of you for being here. This is an important matter. I can assure you that as we move forward on these issues, we get all kinds of different discussions and different points of view, but they're all helpful in making recommendations on the employability issue.

In terms of what we have going on with the microphones, they will automatically turn on and off, so when I identify you, the people at the back will recognize who's going to be speaking and will turn those on for you. There is translation here. Number one is for English, number two is for French.

Each of you will have seven minutes for an opening statement. I'm going to try to keep to it really tightly, because we do have more people presenting. We have six presenters. We need to get through that quickly, so I will keep you to your seven minutes. I'll give you a one-minute warning just so you know that it's coming towards the end. If you don't get a chance to get it all in, hopefully you can use the questions as they're asked by individuals. We'll have one round of seven minutes, followed by a second round of five minutes.

We're going to get started a minute or so early, and I'm going to start on my list here.

Mr. Rae, we're going to let you go first, and you have seven minutes. Now, don't feel you have to use all your seven minutes, ladies and gentlemen, but you're certainly welcome to the seven minutes.

Mr. Rae, it's good to see you, sir.

**Mr. John Rae (President, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians):** Thank you.

Am I first?

**The Chair:** You are first.

**Mr. John Rae:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee.

On behalf of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians—and I'm afraid I'm going to have to speak a little faster than the translators might want, because I've got a lot to cover—I appreciate the opportunity to be here.

What I'm going to do is to call for the Government of Canada to initiate a new national economic strategy for Canadians with a disability, including those of us who are blind, deaf-blind, and partially sighted.

The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians is a national consumer organization that was brought together to give us our own voice, to give us a vehicle for working together to support each other and advocate for change to improve the quality of life for both ourselves and those deaf-blind, blind, and partially sighted individuals who will come after us.

If we look at statistics—and I'm not one who tends to dwell on statistics too much—over the past 25 years, since the release of the landmark *Obstacles* report in 1981, numerous studies and programs have been initiated by government, the private sector, private philanthropic organizations, and consumer organizations such as ours.

If we look at those statistics in an employment context, the irrevocable conclusion is that taken together, those programs may have assisted some individuals. I'm a bit of a success story when it comes to some of the old programs, which I could talk about later. But the unemployment rate and the rate of poverty that continues to confront our community tells us only one thing: taken together, those programs represent a failure.

One of the reasons they represent such a failure is that employment is often looked at only in the context of employment and not in the broader context. That's the reason why. I'm not here to talk about just an employment strategy or a labour market strategy, but an overall economic strategy, because if individuals do not have safe and affordable housing, access to public transit in the communities where we live, coverage for needed disability supports and assisted devices, employer commitment, and most importantly, more money in our pockets, then the goal of getting employed, remaining employed, and advancing in employment is likely to remain elusive.

So what are we after? I've called this a national economic strategy. It must start with new commitment and dedication from the Government of Canada—something that has been lacking from all parties, not just one or two. That's the first thing.

To demonstrate this, the Prime Minister should call together leaders from business, government, labour, and organizations of persons with disabilities, such as ours, to develop this strategy to forge a new collaboration and to show that there is new commitment on the part of the federal government.

In terms of some of the needed building blocks, there's the Employment Equity Act and programs such as the federal contractors program, parts of which have a 100 threshold for employer coverage. In our view, that level is far too high. It needs to be reduced in stages. We can't expect it to be reduced in total overnight; we understand that. So reduce it in stages to an area of about 20, so that employers with 20 or more will be fully covered by the program.

There needs to be new educational programs to get buy-in by employers. There needs to be enhanced infrastructure across Canada to support improvements in public transportation. There needs to be enhanced opportunities for mobility training for blind, deaf-blind, and partially sighted Canadians. Our transportation system needs to be improved.

• (1015)

The Canadian apprenticeship system is crying out for more participants. It talks about chronic skills shortage, yet persons with disabilities are one of the most underemployed and unemployed segments of our population.

We have not taken up the apprenticeship opportunity to the extent we should have, and so the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum needs to be given funding to do further research and develop a strategy to help us participate more in that system.

In the area of training, a number of existing EI-based programs are available only to EI recipients. If we look at our community as being as unemployed as statistics tell you we are, a lot of us have not participated in work to the extent that we become EI recipients, so we're doubly penalized. We didn't get to work, and now we can't qualify for retraining and other programs that are available to those who have had those traditional advantages, advantages we have never had.

**The Chair:** You have one minute, Mr. Rae.

**Mr. John Rae:** Thank you.

We hear about the notion of trickle-down economics. I can only say to you, it trickles down maybe to some, but it ain't trickled down to us.

Some of you worry about the coming recession. We all ought to be concerned about that, but we've never known anything but recessionary times. I hate to tell you that, but that's the reality.

Part of this involves changing the climate. That means fighting the discrimination and isolation that has been our reality. That should include reinstating funding for the court challenges program that was recently cut by the current government. It means focusing on the

various pillars of the national economic strategy; they involve employment and employability, they involve training, they involve transportation, and they involve mobility. They involve lots of things.

Looking at employment alone is not the answer. Employment is one aspect of a much broader problem that confronts blind, deaf and blind, and otherwise disabled Canadians. We have to develop a strategy that looks beyond simply employment. Employment is not simple—I'm not suggesting it is—but only by looking at the issue in a broader context do we have any chance to address the problem that has been our nightmare.

In a country as affluent as Canada, the unemployment and underemployment rate of disabled Canadians is a national disgrace that cries out for redress.

Thank you.

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rae, very much.

We're going to move to Mr. Rankin, Mr. Collins, and Mr. Anderson. You have seven minutes, please. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Robert Collins (Director, Goodwill Industries, Partners in Employment-London/Middlesex):** Thank you.

Mr. Chair and committee members, first let me state our appreciation for the committee's understanding of the travel vagaries of Highway 401, since we were parked for an hour outside Kitchener.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on behalf of Partners in Employment, a coalition of agencies in London and Middlesex County that provides employment services for people with disabilities. PIE's mission is to create a coordinated, person-centred employment and training system for persons with disabilities.

Bruce and I will be sharing the first five minutes and then we'll be joined by Mark Anderson, a new vision advocate, who will make a brief concluding statement.

Like many communities, we are working together to try to improve the employment opportunities and continued employment success for persons with disabilities.

Next week, through the leadership of TD Canada Trust and the London Chamber of Commerce, 250 employers will be attending an Ability First Conference, learning why businesses can prosper when they hire persons with disabilities.

We are about to launch a new resource to facilitate the school-to-work transition for youth with disabilities. We've recently been recognized for our collaborative self-employment, exploration and development program, our SEED program, opening new opportunities for potential entrepreneurs with disabilities.

However, despite these and other local efforts, as our document “The Time to Act is Now: Including People with Disabilities in Employment & Community Life” points out—and I hope all the committee members have received that document—persons with disabilities continue to be unemployed and underemployed, to live in poverty, and to face barriers to full inclusion.

While our document recognizes that all levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors have a role to play, today we wish to emphasize the important role that the federal government needs to play as a catalyst for change, first—as our colleagues from the March of Dimes mentioned earlier—by setting the right context and framework through the establishment of a national disabilities act that would articulate national standards and definitions for many areas, including employment and income support, and would promote inclusion in all aspects of community life. We believe many employers would welcome a clear national framework to facilitate their operations.

**Mr. Bruce Rankin (Manager, Employment Services, Partners in Employment-London/Middlesex):** Secondly, we know Canadians with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as other Canadians. In this time of increasing labour shortages, more than half of all working-age people with disabilities are neither working nor seeking work.

Participation in community activities improves a person's health, sense of well-being, and quality of life. We need to ensure that federal funding and programs work together to address the continuum of needs of people with disabilities.

This includes reviewing and revising the eligibility and access to EI-funded employment programs, including skill development, to reflect the realities of persons with disabilities—qualifying hours of work, local opportunities. It includes working with the particular challenges of some disabilities, for example, the episodic nature of some mental health disabilities. We need to review and revise the labour market agreements for persons with disabilities to ensure that there is an appropriate continuum of services and coordination of service at the community level. This would include support to people with complex or more challenging disabilities by making employment services available to those who require employability assistance, not just employment assistance. Social support and life skills training are an essential first step to employability.

Those deemed harder to serve are currently being excluded. We must support people with disabilities in accessing all forms of employment—be it contract, temporary, seasonal, part-time, or full-time—to match the realities of the changing nature of employee-employer relationships. We need to make long-term employment supports available to people with disabilities based on participant needs to recognize that people with disabilities and their employers require flexibility and a range of accommodation to be successful in the workplace.

We should maintain and expand the opportunities fund, which offers individualized and more flexible approaches for services to job seekers with disabilities and benefits from local planning mechanisms to match local priority. In monitoring the labour market planning agreement and establishing the labour market partnership

agreement, we hope to ensure that persons with disabilities are included and encouraged to participate.

• (1025)

**Mr. Robert Collins:** Thirdly, we urge the federal government to act as a champion and role model in the creation and development of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. We recommend that they consider means such as the following: first, using the purchasing power of the federal government to acquire products and services produced or provided by persons with disabilities; second, creating tax incentives for employers to recognize their cost contributions in hiring and supporting the long-term employment of persons with disabilities; and third, ensuring that the full spectrum of employment opportunities of the federal government and its agencies include persons with disabilities from constituency offices to Parliament Hill.

Mr. Chair and members, thank you for your attention. Mark Anderson will now make a brief concluding statement.

**Mr. Mark Anderson (Member, Partners in Employment-London/Middlesex):** Good morning. My name is Mark Anderson, and I am from London, Ontario. I have a part-time job from Community Living, London, at a small florist shop. I also work at the London Western Fair for two weeks out of the year. It is important to me, because I get to meet new people and make extra money, and because the money I make from the government pension is not enough.

I got help to find a job from Community Living, London, and I'm hoping that someday I can work more than six hours a week or at a different job and maybe have more than one job. I hope there'll be employment services available to help me with these goals when I am ready to take those steps.

I hope you can see by my example that people with disabilities can make a valuable contribution if there are services available to help us.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Caplan, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marvin Caplan (As an Individual):** Good day, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for having me today. Since I know my French is poor, I will be making my presentation in English.

[*English*]

I also want to thank your staff, who have been very polite and very kind in accommodating me here today.

For the francophones here today, I will say it's always humorous to me that while I strongly encouraged my kids to learn French—which I think is a vital thing for our country—they didn't, and I will tell you that each one of my four sons has come to me and admitted that their father was right. That's a very rare thing for parents.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I'm going to tell you a little bit about myself, for a couple of reasons. One is that I used to be a member of a government. I was a member of city council and regional council for the city of Hamilton, and I recall it was quite often the case that when an individual would come, rather than a group, their demeanour and comments were sometimes not quite at the level of those who were representing a larger group.

Just to give you a bit of understanding of why I'm here or the passion that I feel for these things, before I was on city council, I was the president of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and district. I was the president and founder of one of the first business improvement areas in Hamilton. When I was elected, I continued my interest in social issues by looking at where I believed the basis of government is, which I believe is health, because I think all of the things we do talk about a healthy community and healthy individuals. I'll come back to that in a minute.

When I was on the city council, many of you served with Sheila Copps. Her mother was the chair of the persons with disabilities committee in Hamilton. Mrs. Copps and I often would disagree, but I will tell you that her passion about issues for persons with disabilities has helped make our community one of the better communities in Canada for persons with disabilities. She did a number of things that we don't have time to talk about.

I was a member of the executive of the District Health Council. I chaired the public health committee of Hamilton, and then I was chair of the province-wide Association of Local Public Health Agencies. I was a member of the board of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I founded the refugee and immigrant committee for the city of Hamilton. I also founded the gay/lesbian, bisexual, transgender committee. So I have a long history of social inclusion that I'm very proud of. I think I have an understanding of many of the issues that face you that is perhaps a bit more than the average citizen's.

I'm also going to be a little unusual, not only in being here as an individual, but because I'm not going to ask you to spend more money. As a former member of the government, I know that no matter who's in power, dollars are limited. It seems to me there are ways of maintaining the envelope but spending that money a little more wisely.

I should have told you I'm going to talk about four things. The first one is that I understand financial constraints.

The second thing I want to talk about is the need for more cooperation among levels of government. As a former municipal politician, I think many of you will understand that there are things municipalities can do because they are by their nature somewhat closer to some of the issues that face their communities. Unfortunately, not all of them have that same level of understanding or interest in those issues.

I'm going to tell you a short story. A few years ago when the Kosovar refugees came to Canada, I started up a group. Everyone in the group is now angry with me, because they did all the work and I started the group. We sponsored the largest single family that came to Hamilton as refugees, some 38 extended members of a family—

and I'm very proud of what my neighbours and friends did for these people. But when they were refugees sponsored by the federal government, they were not eligible for provincial programs. Until they became—

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** Two minutes, wow! Okay.

So that's a problem. We have to find ways of solving those things.

• (1030)

The third thing is that it has always struck me as very unusual and very weird that we will spend a great deal of time, effort, and money controlling the expenses of how we dole out our finances, auditing them and being very careful that we ensure that the money is well spent for achievable goals that we set up ahead of time to measure, rather than starting from the point of view of what is the best way of achieving the goal. So one of the things you've heard about from other people is the need for advocates for people with disabilities and people, particularly with issues of psychological health. That really was my fourth point, but I wanted to bring in the issue of social inclusion.

You've heard two speakers before me this morning, both of whom talked about the need of employment as a social need. The economics are important, but even more important is the feeling of mental health and contributing to the community.

If we can find a way of inclusiveness and perhaps some sort of negative income tax so that everything we do as a country, and everything we do as a province and as a municipality, helps people to raise their level of contribution to the community rather than holding them back or punishing them.... I realize that's never the intent, but you've heard from others that it's sometimes the effect.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Caplan.

We're going to move on to Mrs. Frache. Seven minutes, please.

• (1035)

**Ms. Pam Frache (Director, Education, Ontario Federation of Labour):** Thanks very much.

I'm pleased to be here and I welcome the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I wholeheartedly agree with the remarks of the previous speakers from the disability community, and I'll touch on a few of those things myself.

The Ontario Federation of Labour represents over 700,000 workers in this province—a variety of workers who have access to training programs, do training programs, and work in the system.

We are extremely disappointed with the federal government's reluctance to honour the labour market partnership agreement. It would have put \$1.3 billion toward the targeted communities that this committee is looking at, namely people facing barriers to the employment markets—people with disabilities, young workers, older workers, and aboriginal peoples. This money would have gone to workplace skills development, literacy, and essential skills training. It would have gone toward integrating immigrants into our workforce, and to apprenticeship programs, all the points that previous speakers have touched on.

What was important about this agreement is that it did precisely what speakers have alluded to: it de-linked access to these training dollars from qualifying for employment insurance. That is a tremendous loss, in addition to the cuts that were announced at the end of September that affect literacy organizations, women's organizations, and people doing the grassroots advocacy in the community that's so critically important to connect workers with employment opportunities.

We reject the notion that there's a labour shortage per se, or that too few workers are employable. In fact, we think we're facing an erosion of modest income and well-paying jobs, under-investment in training and education on the part of government and employers, systemic non-recognition of prior learning and internationally trained credentials, employer reticence to accommodate workers with disabilities and injured workers, inadequate public resources to address literacy issues for Canadian-born and newcomer workers, plus inadequate adjustment programs. Of course, the most basic adjustment program is employment insurance, which fails to provide workers with the safeguards they need before, during, and after periods of layoff.

I want to talk about two worrisome trends in the areas of training and employment strategies. The first is just-in-time training. We're increasingly seeing a market-driven, niche-driven trend toward short-term training that addresses specific needs of the job market. In other words, workers get very specific training to do a very specific job, and once those jobs are not required anymore they're either without employment or they have to go back into the training area.

There's a document put out by the Canada West Foundation that put this explicitly. I'll quote two sentences from it.

It said: "Many companies already provide on-the job training to develop their own specialized skilled labour. Nonetheless, much more could be done by employers in this regard." That's in some way a very worrisome trend, because skills that are developed for one employer aren't necessarily transferrable to another employer.

The document goes on to say: "Because of the time-sensitive nature in which certain industries require skilled workers, there is often a very short window of opportunity for a post-secondary institution to establish training programs." This speaks to the precariousness of training people for only specific short-term jobs and then finding them vulnerable down the road.

We're advocating a much more holistic approach to training, lifelong learning, and so forth, especially in the area of apprenticeship. There's been a growing trend to water down apprenticeship training, despite the fact there is recognition that the red seal program

in the area of apprenticeships is critically important. In fact, one of the goals set out in the labour market partnership agreement was to strengthen the red seal program, but in many ways the opposite is happening.

I'll give you one example of how this is playing itself out in Alberta. Foreign-trained workers were brought in to do a very specific welding job in Alberta, and they brought with them lower working standards, and so forth. They weren't subject to Canadian employment standards and they worked at a much lower wage. When there is an incentive for an employer to hire people who are less qualified, who don't have the full certification, first of all, it means there's not a demand for people getting full certification for their skilled trade, and secondly, it actually puts downward pressure on the wages being earned.

● (1040)

This brings me to the question of concern about a just-in-time workforce. We're seeing this again not just in the area of training, where you bring workers in and then you let the workers go when you see fit, but we're also seeing this on a global scale, where migrant and seasonal workers are being brought in, they work for lower wages, and so on. A worrisome trend is that if governments and employers continue on this path, instead of governments and employers investing in education, investing in training, and investing in those things that actually connect workers with jobs, we're going to see people bypassing the system and bypassing that kind of investment in order to get people who are already trained and who are prepared to work for less money.

I'll conclude by running through a series of recommendations we have.

First of all, I think it's critical that we have a labour market partners forum that brings together the labour movement with government representatives and employers so that we can sit down and actually develop this kind of job strategy that people have alluded to—a job strategy that stewards our natural resources and enhances well-paying jobs for all Canadian workers. We need to honour the labour market partnership forum and get that \$1.3 billion to the targeted groups. It's absolutely critical.

All workers, whether they're migrant or temporary workers, need to have access to the same high living and employment standards as other workers. We need to have a targeted employment and educational program for aboriginal workers, in partnership with aboriginal organizations. We need human rights legislation that requires employers to accommodate the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. In fact, the Canadian Abilities Foundation has noted that the average annual cost of accommodation to employers would be less than \$500 per worker, and yet we've heard about the terms of unemployment and poverty facing these people in these communities.

We need to restore and increase funding to the federal and provincial training and apprenticeship programs that specifically targeted women. We need to restore and increase funding to literacy programs to ensure free access for all adult learners up to and including high school completion. We need to improve the Employment Insurance Act such that literacy skills and skills training are entitlements for both employed and unemployed workers in the same manner as we have pregnancy, parental, sickness, and compassionate care leaves. We need regular insurance benefits that are actually stored so that people can have a living wage while they're suffering unemployment. We need to make sure that people who are taking apprenticeships are eligible for EI for their in-class portion.

We need to commit federal financial support to all provinces that have a training levy that's legislated for employers, for spending on workplace literacy and training. Only employers who would not be investing in training would pay into the levy fund. This fund could be administered by government and overseen by tripartite organizations representing workers' employment, employers, and government.

Finally, we need to strengthen the interprovincial and international portability of credentials through the Red Seal program.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much for your time.

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

We're going to move to our next organization. I believe we have Mr. Mantis and Mr. Buonastella.

Mr. Mantis, seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Steve Mantis (Secretary, Ontario Network of Injured Worker Groups):** Thank you for inviting us here today.

My name is Steve Mantis. I'm the secretary of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups. We have 21 member organizations across Ontario, from Ottawa to Thunder Bay, where I'm from, to southern Ontario.

I guess I've been doing this too long. I get a little jaded. We have been advocating for employment for workers with a disability for, personally, over 22 years and feel like our desires and our words have been twisted and used against us, and our members end up in poverty, depressed, in crisis, losing their family, and even sometimes committing suicide. I'm asking, what do I have to say to get your attention to do something? What do I need to do that will bring home to you the suffering we see day in and day out? I don't know.

I want to really focus on income security, because that is what people need. People need to be able to pay the bills. And it seems like our society is moving to a place that says, let the market decide. Well, if the market is going to decide, who's going to hire people who have a disability? You tell me.

Historically, we can look at the numbers for injured workers. These are people who have established job histories. They have years and years, oftentimes, in the workforce, and end up with a permanent disability. Many of these disabilities are not even visible. You wouldn't even know it. But 50% to 80% are chronically unemployed, and I say 50% to 80% because no one even wants to know what the impact is. It's not something that people are really looking into in terms of what the impact is.

Somewhere just under one million workers in Canada today have been acknowledged as having a permanent disability as the result of a workplace injury or disease in Canada—almost one million. There are over 300,000 here in Ontario. Most of these are unemployed.

We hear there's a labour shortage and we have to bring people in. What's the deal? We have an established work history with hundreds of thousands of employers. We know the job. But there is a lack of commitment and a lack of understanding to providing that accommodation and helping to maintain employment.

I was in Montreal earlier this week for two days. It was a gathering put on by the public health agency in Quebec, and the conference was focusing on preventing work disability. We had researchers, clinicians, insurers, employers, and a few workers, and the whole focus, all they wanted to talk about, was return to work: "Oh, we're going to get you back to work and everything's going to be fine." But the anecdotal information we have doesn't bear that out, and certainly the research doesn't bear that out either.

What happens—and we've seen this both anecdotally and in terms of research—is that people want to go back to work, they're eager and they go back to work, but the accommodation isn't there. The management doesn't really do it in a supportive way. The worker ends up becoming injured again, and they're off. Then they go back again and they become injured, and the disability is now getting worse. Now we have mental health issues involved because of the dynamics, and you feel like you're not wanted there.



Last week, at home, I had a guy come and say he had been crushed. It was logging. He was crushed between a skidder and a truck—all internal injuries, so you can't really see them. But he said he was scared about going back to work because, as a mechanic, he felt that when injured workers came to work they were all slackers. That's what he thought. He said, "I didn't want to have anything to do with them, and now I'm in that position. I'm going to go back there and I know my co-workers and my supervisor are going to think I'm scamming. It makes me feel terrible." This is a master mechanic, with 30 years on the job.

• (1045)

So here we have, in Montreal, all these people with best interests, and researchers who know everything, and all they can think about is that they've got to get people back to work as fast as possible. They don't look at whether you're able to maintain that employment and what happens in the long term, but we see it. And what we see is that 70% of these people end up in poverty.

A recent study done here in Toronto on homelessness, by Street Health, found that 57% of the homeless people they interviewed were injured workers. Yes, we need all this help for employment, there's no doubt about it, but we need a platform so that we can live while we're engaged in being fully inclusive in society. One can't replace the other. Without the money to live, all the rest of it here is fluff, it's covering the problems, and that's really the issue.

The systems we have in place are being deteriorated. People are seeing us as scammers. And we need to be able to say, I put in my time, I paid for it, and I shouldn't have to now starve as a result. So we really look for you, in a number of programs, whether it's the EI sickness that was mentioned earlier, which people can't access because they're in and out of the workforce; whether it's the Canada Pension Plan disability program, which, depending on the government, is more open or less open; whether it is the compensation systems, which we see all across the country are cutting back and demonizing workers and people are ending up in poverty.... This is a shame. We need to say it's not the market that decides. We want a country that is inclusive, that values all its members, and has, number one, that you're not going to have to live on the street as a result of being disabled.

Thank you.

• (1050)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mantis.

We're going to move to our last presenter, Mr. Crawford. Seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Cameron Crawford (Director, Research and Knowledge Management, Canadian Association for Community Living):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me.

These are very hard acts to follow.

In my work is as a researcher, I was previously with the Roehrer Institute and am now with the Canadian Association for Community Living. My comments will be specific to people who have intellectual disabilities, although when we get to the recommenda-

tions part of my little talk, there will be a broader applicability as well.

When speaking about people with intellectual disabilities, just to be clear, I'm referring to people who used to be called mentally handicapped in Canada and who are still called persons with mental retardation in the United States. Fortunately, Canada has played a lead role in shifting some of the language to a more respectful approach, which is catching on internationally.

These are people who have very significant cognitive difficulties and who face a range of practical difficulties with everyday activities that most of us can do without major problem. We're talking about approximately 2% of the population in developed countries. Estimates vary a little, but we can probably assume that about 400,000 working-age Canadians, 15 to 64 years of age, have some level of intellectual disability.

We know that about 109,000 people with intellectual disabilities are registered in the Statistics Canada 2001 disability survey, the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey. This for the most part is a fairly severely disabled group of people. Having said that, the employment rates for this group of people have been low for the last 10 years or more. Well, they've been low forever, but based on statistical evidence that we have for the last 10 years or so, they've been hovering around 30%. That's a very high non-participation rate, when you consider that in 2001 almost 73% were either unemployed or not in the labour force.

Approximately 40% of these folks have never worked. We're talking here about a large underutilization of human potential. If you were to speak to people, almost to a person you would, I'm sure, hear that they want to work. They want to be involved in their communities; they want to be contributing. They certainly want to have more money than what is available in most provinces and territories through social assistance, and it is a job that would be the ticket to a better income.

Indeed, where people with intellectual disabilities are employed—and this is again going back to the 2001 disability survey, which focuses on a fairly severely disabled group of people—they're earning on average somewhere around \$14,000 a year. This is not major money from most people's point of view, but it's actually thousands of dollars more than what is currently available through provincial and territorial social assistance programs. You can't live high off the hog with that kind of money, but you can live better than in dire poverty.

Getting people jobs is an important endeavour for their mental well-being, but also for the vitality and inclusiveness of our communities. There actually have been gains in recent years, particularly in the last decade, in furthering the employment of people with intellectual disabilities in regular jobs in local communities—not in sheltered or segregated workshops for the disabled, but in real jobs in real communities.

To be sure, a lot of people will need some level of ongoing assistance in order to maintain that job. The assistance might come informally, from employers and from their co-workers, and you may need some external assistance from agencies, such as Community Living in London and other communities, that go in and work with employers, work with co-workers—soften the workplace, so to speak—and help people understand what an individual needs in order to thrive in the workplace.

Currently we don't have a system that intentionally goes about doing that kind of work with people who have intellectual disabilities, so the persisting pattern is that people are falling through the cracks.

What can be done to improve things? I'm going to speak mainly to what falls pretty clearly within the federal jurisdiction. The labour market development agreements, as has been pointed out here, systematically exclude people who have histories that haven't involved a lot of attachment to the labour force, which would include many people with intellectual disabilities. That system is actually pretty well funded. There's a lot of potential for it to be more inclusive, to provide wider access to training for people who are currently excluded in large numbers.

• (1055)

The system could also make available longer-term employment supports than are currently available. Typically, those that are available will be there for people for maybe a year. These would be auxiliary supports for employment, training, and so on, maybe up to 72 weeks if you're lucky, but typically that wouldn't be the case.

The opportunities fund, which has been mentioned, was designed in part to get around that problem, but it limps along on a very iffy basis. It's uncertain from year to year whether or not it's going to be funded, so everybody is in a state of hysteria. It would be better if that were more robustly funded so it could deal with more people who need the support. It would also be a greater measure of security for organizations that are always having to lay off their staff.

Federal and territorial officials could put their heads together to figure out how to render provincial social assistance systems such that people won't lose the other supports that they need—not just the income support, which is critically important, but also the attendant services, the medications, and so on, which for many people are only available if they're attached to the provincial social assistance system. Arguably, that's just dumb. It's bad social policy. It's better for people to be able to work and make some of their own money, rather than being reliant in the long term on passive income support. Governments would have to continue paying for some of the other supports that people need, but it makes more economic sense for governments to do that than it does for them to be paying full freight for the income support and the disability supports.

There are those and other measures that are needed, such as an accommodation fund. It would be available primarily, I would argue, to small and mid-sized businesses that don't have the operating capital to invest in accommodations.

We're talking about money here. The money has to be wisely spent. I understand that there are many competing demands; however, we could have a more thoughtful and more systematic

approach that could open the doors to employment for people who have been excluded for decades now and whose contribution to their communities has gone unheralded.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Crawford.

I want to thank all the witnesses for working, under very difficult circumstances, to keep it within seven minutes. I know you could speak for seven or eight hours on all these issues. It certainly has been the case that we do appreciate your taking the time and presenting to us.

We now start our first round of questions and answers, which will be seven minutes, beginning with Mr. D'Amours.

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** For those who need translation, I will ask my questions in French.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I want to thank you for taking the time to come here to speak to us this morning. I know some of you got caught in traffic on the 401. Back home in rural New Brunswick, there aren't many traffic tie-ups. When traffic is bad, it takes us seven minutes instead of five to get to work.

In previous submissions, you talked about the budget cuts a number of groups experienced following the government's announcement in September. I come from a Francophone minority community. As you can appreciate, these cuts have affected minority official language communities in particular and minorities in general.

Have the cuts to the Court Challenges Program, to literacy programs and to women's programs forced some of your groups to fight to preserve the status quo, rather than focus on building the future? Maybe it's not so obvious for certain groups. Nevertheless, generally speaking, in so far as disabled persons are concerned, are you not worried about these budget cuts that affect the most vulnerable members of our society? Some of your organizations or causes could be targeted for future cuts.

The government sent out a negative message to the Canadian public in late September. As a Liberal member, this worries me a great deal. Given how deep these cuts go — something that was completely unexpected — I wonder what we can expect next? Basically, it was the same as being hit over the head with a shovel when you least expect it.

I'll give you a chance to respond.

• (1100)

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** That's a very good question. It really speaks to the role of the federal government in this area.

In order to design programs that are effective for people with disabilities, it's key to involve those people in the design of the program. The United Nations commission that was looking at people with disabilities actually has a book on this. It says that you need to ensure that representation that is accountable back to the group is involved in the process.

In fact, the federal government did this twenty years ago. They had a Department of the Secretary of State that would fund community groups on a range of issues. They would provide \$5,000 or \$10,000 or \$15,000 to allow those groups to meet together to develop their positions and have a democratic process so that they could participate.

In fact, all the funding for community groups with people with disabilities has been cut, except at the national level. It's good that this funding is there, but what's out is the grassroots participation, so the national level loses touch. We're really asking the federal government to look at this and say that it will support these community-based groups.

This is the other part where the social identity is important. Many of our members aren't going to go back to work. What can they do that gives them some self-esteem? They can participate in the democratic community process.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Mantis.

Mr. Crawford, then Mr. Collins, and then Mr. Rae.

Could we have quick answers? We don't have much time.

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** Funding cuts are never welcomed by any organization. From my point of view, the problems with the funding actually began more than a decade ago. In about the mid-1990s, disability organizations started to feel the pinch in a major way. The pinch became more like a crushing—it was just awful—beginning in about 2000. It has become very difficult for disability organizations—and I would include those at the national level—to function.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada is down to three staff. The Canadian Council on Social Development has been laying people off. At CACL, there is hardly anybody there. Roehrer is virtually gone. It has been a very difficult funding environment for at least a decade, so more cuts are never welcomed.

But I think there is a broader, longer-lasting problem here that has to be addressed as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We have about a minute and a half left. I'll go to Mr. Collins, Mr. Rae, and Mr. Caplan. You'll be the last three for that one.

**Mr. Robert Collins:** Thank you.

People at risk and vulnerable people need assurances that programs and services will be there to support them. When they see cuts, they think they're next. Therefore, they're not prepared then, and they are then more reluctant to access the services that are still on the ground.

Employers want the guarantee that there is long-term support, that there is a response if somebody they've hired gets into difficulty.

There's uncertainty about the opportunities fund. There's perhaps a lack of implementation of the voluntary sector accord that was meant to have a planned, full process of engagement of the voluntary sector. All those things have put our communities at a level of uncertainty about future development that does not allow for planned, full, sustained help and/or...*[Inaudible—Editor]*...not only serving the people we're trying to serve, but also the employers we're trying to serve.

• (1105)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Rae for thirty seconds, and then Mr. Caplan for thirty seconds.

**Mr. John Rae:** The cuts are scary. In a democracy, there is a need for citizens' groups. For our community, the court challenges program has been an important part. It's one thing to have rights, but we have to be able to enforce those rights.

When you think about it, persons with disabilities submit more cases to all human rights commissions than any other group in our society. A program like that is therefore really important, and it has been important to our community. We need that program to continue.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Rae.

We'll have a last comment from Mr. Caplan.

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I have two brief points. Yes, I agree with what Mr. D'Amours said, but I started off by saying there's only one taxpayer. The question is how you maintain this craziness of reduced taxes. We all want social services on the European scale and taxes on the American scale, but that doesn't work.

One of the things we should be thinking about is replacing many of these programs with some sort of negative tax so that we can see that we're doing things fairly.

The other point is that, from the point of view of a fiscal conservative, one should understand that there's one taxpayer. While the federal taxes may be going down, the responsibilities for those same costs are now being borne by provincial and municipal governments.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Caplan.

We're going to move to Madam Bonsant for seven minutes please.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** I understand what you're saying, Mr. Mantis. My brother also lost an arm when he was 18 years old. He was listed as disabled on his driver's licence, but from a tax standpoint, he was not entitled to a credit because he wasn't deemed sufficiently disabled. He had problems finding a job and was always told that he couldn't be hired for insurance purposes. It's not like he was applying to drive a bulldozer. He was a white collar worker.

Mr. Crawford, as far as budgets cuts are concerned, as Mr. Caplan was saying, they all affect the same taxpayer. However, as I see it, tax revenues allocated to non-governmental organizations, whether for disabled persons or for some other purpose, represent an investment. If we don't put money into rehabilitating people, we'll be paying to keep them locked up. Building prisons is not a solution. These individuals are entitled to a life.

I know of mentally disabled persons who hold down jobs. However, they may be so severely disabled and because of time constraints, they may not be getting the attention they need from people.

If you had the same operating budgets as you had in 1993, before the Liberals started to slash program spending, could you hire people to properly supervise disabled persons working in an industrial setting? Would that help you promote the development of mentally or physically disabled persons?

[English]

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** I think the community-level organizations have been feeling the pinch for many years. It has not been easy for them to make available the supports that people with intellectual disabilities require.

In some provinces the situation is a bit better than in others; there is just more money and the community organizations are better funded. Overall the feeling has been over the past decade or so—and it's sort of gotten more intense—that it's getting tougher and tougher to make these supports available.

I agree with you that without the practical assistance from people working at the community level, these individuals with quite complex challenges will be sidelined entirely from the community, and then they're either going to fall into institutions, which is not a good idea, or they're going to end up disproportionately on social assistance. The money will be spent, but it'll be spent for the wrong reasons.

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** I see. Thank you.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Mantis, did you want to comment?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes, I'd like to follow up.

Working at the national level and learning from our representatives from Quebec, I think we can learn a lot from the process in Quebec, where they have a philosophical system that says citizens have an important role to play in the community; and the government, the collector of the taxes, has a role to play in supporting that community involvement. We see that some of the groups get funded because of that principle. As a result, there's a more vibrant community, more debate, and more discussion on some of these issues.

I think we can learn from folks in Quebec, and I would like us to move in that direction a little more.

• (1110)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** I would like to give an opportunity to Mr. Rae.

**Mr. John Rae:** I appreciate your understanding that a lot of programs are investment in people. Unfortunately, people who are in the programs are often the first to get cut, and we saw that recently.

I was in a meeting recently where someone quoted *Forbes Magazine*. It said that the wealth of the wealthiest 500 people in this world is equal to that of the poorest 416 million. What that says

clearly to me is that while there is only one taxpayer, there needs to be greater emphasis on wealth redistribution. Part of that wealth redistribution needs to be aimed at our communities.

[Translation]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Ms. Bonsant, you have...

**Ms. France Bonsant:** No one else wishes to comment?

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Is there somebody else who wants to answer?

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** I want to give everyone an opportunity to speak their mind, because we've met with many different people. Since you're here, take the time to say what you have to say. The Conservative government in office has to listen to you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Fine.

Mr. Collins.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Collins:** The services in our community are very thin on the ground. There is a need for sustained funding to be able to support services to include people. The lifetime cost of income support for an individual must be considered in terms of their ability to participate compared with the capacity of the social income system. We need a much higher level of national income security, plus the ability to participate in society. I am talking about support for those who can participate, not a blanket participation.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Ms. Frache.

**Ms. Pam Frache:** I think the services are incredibly important. The budget cuts announced at the end of September will produce a definite impact in the form of court challenges, literacy funding, and youth employment programs. The unemployment rate among young people is over 21%. Yet we have a government that's going to reduce the funding that actually creates jobs for young people. This reduction of funds, combined with the \$1.3 billion cut to training and literacy programs, amounts to \$2 billion worth of cuts in money that would have helped some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I'm extremely concerned about the impact of these cuts. I'm particularly worried about how this is going to affect the long-term stability of Canada. Right now we have a resource export boom that's being driven in Alberta, but those natural resources aren't being stewarded to create jobs across the country that everybody has access to. While corporations are making record profits, we have a situation in Canada where the gap between the highest- and the lowest-paid people is growing. How is that possible? There's something wrong with the trickle-down theory. It simply hasn't ever worked.

I'll just end by saying we don't need to worry about having a competitive corporate tax rate at the moment. Our corporate tax rates are actually lower than those in the United States. So the question is distribution and how to accomplish it.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Ms. Nash.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** I want to make a brief comment and then give you time to speak.

I know that in my own community people with disabilities are among the most desperate, especially those with intellectual disabilities. We went through the whole deinstitutionalization process, and I see the results on the streets in our area. What's clear is the lack of support for people who want to get back into the workforce, which everyone I talk to wants to do, and the lack of support for housing, which is so critical.

The troubling thing about these cuts that were announced a month ago is their ingenuity. In some cases, the services are left intact—the women's shelters, the literacy programs. What's being carved out is the resources, the training for people to deliver the programs, the advocacy. This will lead to the silencing of democratic voices and the ultimate erosion of these programs.

I want to ask about John Rae's proposal on employment equity—extending it to small and medium businesses. Mr. Collins, many small businesses are the ones that are out there hiring in my neighbourhood. What kind of support will these small and medium businesses need to be able to do this kind of hiring? That's one question.

Also, I'm vice-chair of the government operations committee, which is responsible for procurement. What are your thoughts on what we could be doing about procurement in Canada? I'm asking Mr. Rae, Mr. Collins, and anyone else.

• (1115)

**Mr. John Rae:** Thank you for your question.

On the procurement side, the Government of Canada should not purchase any equipment that isn't usable by everybody. Inaccessible computer equipment and inaccessible telephone equipment still gets purchased. The Government of Canada needs to use a contract compliance approach whereby it stops purchasing inaccessible equipment unless and until it is usable by everybody. Second, it should reach out more to businesses run by our community.

The other part of your question I wanted to address, which is—

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** About employment equity and small and medium-sized businesses.

**Mr. John Rae:** Smaller businesses will probably need some support in terms of being able to cover the costs of technical equipment. There is, of course, a duty to accommodate already in place through human rights law, but to make that possible—and here I think the Government of Canada could help, either directly or through the provinces—create a new fund so that some of the costs of accommodation can be covered by public funds.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Thank you.

Mr. Collins.

**Mr. Robert Collins:** In response to your question, my understanding is that the federal Employment Equity Act only applies to federally regulated industries, and therefore, it would only cover—

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** And contractors.

**Mr. Robert Collins:** And contractors. Therefore, it would only cover a certain part of the spectrum. The argument for a national disabilities act means that it would be more pervasive and broader.

Second, my understanding is that under the federal Employment Equity Act at the moment, persons with disabilities have been the least successful groups in terms of making progress, compared to the other equity groups. Maybe the analyst can assist on whether or not I'm accurate, but that's my understanding. Therefore, I'm not sure that's the most effective means to reach the goal I think you're after.

Many employers in small and medium-sized businesses are fantastic employers of persons with disabilities. The encouragement and support they need are where there are excessive costs for accommodation, and means of supporting that. Also, though, they require the knowledge, and this is what we keep finding from our feedback. Will they be there when Johnny has an issue six months from now? Our funding is only to support them for three months. Yes, we will be there, but that's money we'll have to raise ourselves to provide that extra support. So it's not by program design that the employer support is there, and that's only within certain agency's capacities to do that. It's not a national program with national sets of standards employers can count on.

As for procurement, there are fantastic examples from other jurisdictions. One I would let you look at—but say there are a number of cautions to it—is NISH program in the United States, where they, significantly, use federal funds to acquire a whole set of services, with the requirement that they hire persons with disabilities in the application or provision of those services. The program is currently being reviewed by the House in the United States. It does require it to be more inclusive in its approach in terms of the workplace, so it's not just replicating sheltered workshops, but providing some real opportunity for people with disabilities to be in the workforce.

• (1120)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Mantis and Mr. Crawford, if you can do it in 30 seconds each, please.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Looking around the world in terms of what seems to work best for hiring people with disabilities, the German system seems to have become the best. They have a system of grant levies—6% of your workforce needs to be people with disabilities, and if you don't have that, you pay 200 deutschmarks a month. That money goes into a restricted fund that then supports employment for people with disabilities. A fund created directly from employers can help support the necessary accommodation and training.

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** If we ensure that people have at least high school education, get back for some retraining, and get the disability supports they require—for example, the help from other people, technologies, wheelchairs, medications and so on—and if we ensure that the community transportation system is accessible for people, the chances are very good that the employment levels for people with disabilities will be very close to those of other Canadians.

In order to achieve those goals there needs to be more collaboration between various levels of government. Community transportation is a municipal responsibility. The issue of disability supports kind of cuts across the federal and provincial jurisdictions. I think we really do need to look at how to get levels of government working more effectively together, so they can put in place the accommodation funding, the disability supports funding, and use their collective economies of scale through procurement. These supports could be much more affordable if governments were to join forces and jointly purchase the accessible technologies that John has suggested are needed, to jointly purchase the medications people require and so on.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Thank you.

We will now turn to Mr. Brown for seven minutes.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barric, CPC):** Thank you.

I appreciate everyone's comments today, for coming and taking time out of what I'm sure are busy schedules to share your opinions with us today.

I have a few questions touching on the last comment of Mr. Crawford about training. This is a question I asked earlier today when we had a different deputation. What role do you see for the federal government in putting forward more training? Is it inadequate or are there opportunities for the government to improve on existing programs?

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** If you look at the Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report, EMR, and if you look at the participation rates of people with disabilities across jurisdictions in various kinds of programming, you'll find they're far under-represented in relation to the actual prevalence of disability in the working-age population. What's also interesting is that some provinces do much better in terms of involving people with disabilities than do others. For example, Nova Scotia does quite a good job. They have, you could say, a disproportionately large proportion of people with disabilities participating there in various kinds of training. In Ontario, it's simply dismal with respect to levels of participation in apprenticeship programs.

There's a lot of unevenness here, and arguably the federal government could play a bit of a role in setting...I don't like the term "national standards", but maybe some common priorities and objectives that the provinces could buy into, where there'd be some sense of joint ownership and responsibility for achieving better results for people with disabilities than what has been achieved to date.

If you look at those reports, you'll see that historically the levels of participation by people with disabilities in the labour market programming available under part II of the EI Act has been very low.

• (1125)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Rae.

**Mr. John Rae:** I've spoken about the need for leadership from the Government of Canada. Here, Treasury Board needs to make the federal public service a model employer, which it's not now. One of the aspects of this—and there are a lot more aspects—is that in the area of training, not only does the federal government need to establish a vigorous outreach recruitment strategy, but it should

create an internship program specifically in the disabled community to help bring us in. Once we're in, then programs need to be put in place for retention and advancement.

While the focus for some groups is retention, for us it's often getting us in the door to begin with. Lots of us have the training, skills, and desire to work, but we need programs to bring us into employment situations. Treasury Board needs to take the lead and make the federal public service a model employer, so that others can follow that lead. That involves a lot of work.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Ms. Frache and then Mr. Mantis.

**Ms. Pam Frache:** I want to come back to the labour market partnership agreement. The portion allocated to addressing those facing barriers to employment would have been \$80 million that would have targeted those people with disabilities and so forth.

Again, I think one of the key things is that this agreement be honoured. It was a signed document between the federal government and the Ontario government, and Stephen Harper himself put in writing prior to the federal election that the agreement would be honoured. With that money coming into the system, it's \$1.3 billion that would be available to people who don't need to qualify for EI. That's the whole point of that particular agreement, so I think it's a critical step forward in terms of what resources we can make available for training.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Mantis.

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** I'm going to come at this from a different angle. I'm going to build on what John Rae talked about. If the federal government could be a model employer, maybe they could put some of those dollars into training management.

We have consistently seen policies and practices that are dictated by management as being the barriers to employing people with disabilities. Once you get into a structure, that this is the way it has to be done, the room for accommodation starts disappearing. Managers see having to accommodate as challenging their authority to dictate how work is done.

I can tell you that I myself have been able to be accommodated throughout my career, because I've been in management. I have control over how the work gets done. I can get the work done, no problem. But if I have to do it according to your norm or your norm, I'm going to run into problems. So maybe a little funding for management....

Canada Post is one of the worst. They're a huge employer run by the government. They're terrible in terms of how they treat their workers. It's just shameful.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Collins.

**Mr. Robert Collins:** I didn't hear the question. I think we were being asked about the broader challenge of increasing an educated workforce, including persons with disabilities.

I think it's very clear that we need to have employer incentives for training. We also need to take a longer-term approach to training. We need clear regional and local strategies to what the labour market conditions are over the longer term, rather than just quick fixes. As we've heard earlier, people are being trained for short-term positions. They are not taking the longer view. That got us into trouble with doctors. It got us into trouble with nursing. It got us into trouble with every area of our society. It has to take a longer view.

There needs to be planning mechanisms, with dollars applied to local priorities outside the institutional system that can allow for planning to occur with the full forces of labour, the disability community, and others participating in that.

I hope that's helpful.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Caplan, 30 seconds.

• (1130)

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** Education is a provincial matter. However, finding ways of encouraging provinces and municipalities to keep these things going is something that has not been at the forefront. It seems to me, as someone formerly from the most junior level of government, that the bickering is difficult.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Now we will start the second round. It will be five minutes each.

Ms. Brown.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Frache, you said that every province needs a such-and-such fund, but I didn't get the name of it.

**Ms. Pam Frache:** Thank you for that question. It's a training fund that is modelled on Quebec. Essentially, it's a training levy. Employers who are not investing already in training in their workplace pay into this fund, which then is dispersed.

Actually, it sounds similar in concept to the idea of an injured workers fund. The idea would be that for those people who are already investing, this would help level the playing field and expand the resources available to training.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you very much. I have so little time.

You said the federal government is not honouring the labour market partnership agreement, which is over \$1 billion. Is the money not flowing? This is something that neither Ms. Nash nor I are really aware of. As briefly as you can tell me, what is happening there?

**Ms. Pam Frache:** It was a \$1.3 billion agreement, the allocation for which appeared nowhere in the federal budget. There's been an exchange between the Ontario government and the federal government. The federal government essentially is saying it's going to address training issues through "the fiscal imbalance discussion".

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** I wondered if that was it.

I want to also thank you for rejecting the notion of a labour shortage, which gives people the excuse of bringing in short-term workers from other countries to solve problems that the market isn't solving. On that, I want to thank Mr. Mantis for pointing out that the

market doesn't decide things very well, at least not for the long-term economic or social health of any country.

You mentioned these various support systems. Are you suggesting it is now time to move to a guaranteed annual income, merging all these things in some sensible way?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes, the two options we're trying to look at more closely are a guaranteed annual income and a universal disability insurance program.

I'm going to be speaking later this weekend on a universal disability insurance program. Regardless of the disability—and I think you heard a little about this earlier today—people would be covered under that. Hopefully it would be a supportive program that would offer the range of supports you've heard about that are needed, from income security, to accommodation, training, and other supports to be full members of society.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Thank you, and thank you for articulating so very well the frustrations of someone who has spent years trying to help others and feels they are getting nowhere.

That takes me to Mr. Caplan, who had a very impressive resumé of helping and creating things to help vulnerable people. I was absolutely amazed when you kept saying there is only one taxpayer. Actually, there isn't only one taxpayer; there is a collective of taxpayers, some of whom are taking home a lot more money than others.

For example, the top 20% of income-earning families are now taking home 43% of the national income; whereas the bottom 20% are only taking home 5%. All of those are individual taxpayers, but are you satisfied that it is all just fine?

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I think there's a difficulty in presenting to a committee that is from all parties. My personal philosophy is somewhat left of centre; however, we live in a country with very diverse opinions.

**Ms. Bonnie Brown:** Yes, but that opinion keeps being repeated over and over again by the business-dominated media both in the United States and here. But I would expect a person such as you, with an acute social conscience, to take the opportunity to put on the record how you really feel about those things, as opposed to mimicking the corporate slogans.

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I don't think I did. I said that taxpayers in Canada expect to pay American-style taxes while having European-style social services, and they can't. I also suggest that this country is proud of itself because of its social conscience. What makes us Canadians is that we reject many of the silly notions of that country to the south of us.

You used the words "guaranteed annual income". Politically, I don't think that would fly in much of Canada. But a negative tax that talks about replacing programs with an income-by-right so that people can afford to integrate themselves into the community would make sense.

The other thing I commented on was that we need the facts. We look at many of these things from a perspective of left or right of centre. We need to find a way for all of us to find a common cause in building the best community. Part of that is ensuring that we have the right as human beings, as citizens of this country, to be treated with dignity and to participate as fully as possible within that community.

• (1135)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Ms. Brown, I am sorry. You have already passed your time by a minute.

[Translation]

We're back to Ms. Bonsant.

You have five minutes.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** It's not an insult, Mr. Caplan, or anything like...

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** Are you speaking to me?

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Yes, I am.

I too served as a municipal councillor for eight years. I have a question for you. You claim to be left of centre. I respect that.

Municipal government is the level of government closest to the people, that is to our society and our community.

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** To our families.

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Precisely.

Each year, the federal government amasses a surplus of between \$2 and \$2.5 billion. Instead of giving this money to the people who deserve it, who have worked, the government is using it to pay down the debt.

In my opinion, the government should be reinvesting half of the surplus into post-secondary education and municipal infrastructure. It's all well and good to be a paper pusher in Ottawa or Quebec City, but the municipalities are in the best position to know the needs of rural regions.

Would you be in favour of the government taking a portion of the surplus in the EI fund and transferring it to municipalities to help them deliver basic services?

[English]

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I think your comments are very well put. It strikes me, however, that you need to have a balance.

Again, I agree with you. I started out by saying we should be doing things within the envelope. I can tell you, if I were the Prime Minister of this country and could wave a magic wand, I'd raise taxes. I think we have obligations to our fellow citizens to maintain as human and as rich a quality of life as we can.

I think my understanding of economics is that all of the right-wing economists are nuts, because when you put money in the hands of the less affluent, they spend it, and that money goes back into the economy and allows us to grow the economy. If you give money to wealthy people, the reason they're wealthy is that they don't spend it; they save it. Sometimes they invest it in Canada, and sometimes they don't. Capital has no conscience. Money goes where it will return the best reward.

However, as Canadians, we do have consciences and we should be treating each other with a certain level of respect and love, and I think in order to do that, the importance of not blaming and pointing fingers and raising the level of dignity....

They haven't said it to you, but they've said it to you. When you talk to people with disabilities, what happens is that quite often they are tired of being treated as human waste.

We did something that everybody thought was a great idea. We were going to deinstitutionalize people with mental disabilities. What we did was deinstitutionalize them, but we didn't take the same money and put it back into support in the program. So now what you have is a call for more police on the street. The average municipality today in Ontario is spending over 25% of its budget for policing. That's crazy. It's nuts. Why are they spending money on police? Because people don't feel secure. Why don't people feel secure? Because there is a growing cohort of people who are in need, who turn to crime or to drugs or to other things—a social cost that is amazing.

So what we have to do is balance what we do as a community not only fiscally but socially. I believe in my heart and I believe in my intellect that if we were to do that, our country would be richer, both socially and fiscally.

• (1140)

[Translation]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Thank you very much.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Mantis, do you want to answer—in a quick 30 seconds, please?

**Mr. Steve Mantis:** Yes. It seems that in this move to the global economy, everybody is looking for ways to cut costs, and because the compensation systems are funded through premiums by employers, employers have been trying to find ways to reduce those costs for disabled workers.

The impact has been a cost-shifting, away from the costs being paid by employers to the greater community. You can look at the increases in Canada Pension Plan disability payments, in payments by municipal levels in terms of welfare and disability pensions. Injured workers are calling for the national government to set national standards that would include preventing that cost-shifting and that those who are legally responsible should be paying the fare rather than putting it onto the public purse.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Thank you, Madame Bonsant.

We'll go now to Ms. Nash for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Frache, I wanted to go back to your comment about skills training. You talked about just-in-time training and training that doesn't train the whole person; it trains on a very narrow skills set and often on a very temporary basis.



I have three children. When they went through the school system, it seemed as though there were two options. One option was that you could try to go to university. There, of course, the costs are skyrocketing. That would be one course of action. The other course of action was to fall into this never-never land of low-paying temporary jobs and obviously a very insecure future. Now that future also awaits some university grads, but there were those two courses of action.

What didn't seem to be offered as a course of action was encouragement to go into a trade. We know that the skilled trades are often a ticket to greater job security, better pay, and more job satisfaction, but unlike other countries, we don't seem to have a national apprenticeship program that we can help our young people get into or that can help newcomers to Canada to translate their skills into a secure livelihood for themselves and their families.

We're here from the federal government. What would your recommendation be to get Canada on the right track for a strong skills set for the skills we need for the 21st century, one that steers away from the just-in-time training you're talking about?

**Ms. Pam Frache:** Thank you for the question.

I think we need an overall strategy that really prioritizes training, learning, and so forth. I'll touch on a couple of things.

The Red Seal program is a national program and is internationally recognized. It means that anybody who has a Red Seal certificate in a skilled trade can go anywhere in Canada and around the world. One would think we would be striving for this as a country. Instead, that's not happening, and because it is in provincial jurisdictions, there are fragmentations taking place. I think reinvesting in and reinvigorating the Red Seal Program would be extremely important.

There is also the question of a training levy. I think that's something we could even look at through federal measures, and that would actually address one of the biggest issues. It's true that there is the perception that there's university or there's nothing, but when apprenticeships are posted, there's a huge demand, and there's all sorts of anecdotal evidence that the demand for apprenticeships actually exceeds the supply. Part of the reason is that employers are actually not creating the apprenticeship opportunities; for whatever reasons, they're not investing. They basically look at either bringing in people who are already trained or they look at people with only partial skills. There is an enforcement of regulations; for example, people can hire people who have a portion of a credential at a lower rate of pay, and employers are increasingly looking to those back-door approaches rather than actually wanting to pay skilled journey people, and so forth.

In the college and university systems, they pressure people to get out of the system. You know, no dilly-dallying around—get in, get out, get in, get out, and so forth. In the colleges, there's more and more reliance on certificate programs. In six weeks you can go and do lab technician or whatever, and this kind of fragmentation is actually not whole-person learning.

My own feeling is that we need a national education act that would take the three pillars of post-secondary education—college, university, apprenticeship—and develop common standards, common credentials, and so forth, and really invest in education and

lifelong learning. From literacy to English as a second language training, all of those investments pay back several times over. In fact, I was just reading in a study that even investment in apprenticeships gives something like a 400% return on every dollar invested, so that within three or four years, investment in apprenticeship is essentially more or less free.

● (1145)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Crawford, could you give a quick answer, please?

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** I tend to agree with everything you said, but in order for that to occur, I think the federal government probably needs to reposition itself back in the business of playing a leadership role around training and post-secondary education in Canada.

Beginning in 1997, there was massive devolution of what had been historically 40 or 50 years of federal leadership and funding for training. That's gone to the provinces and territories. How can you have a national system when you've really got 13 systems, with some players involved more or less reluctantly in the game? I know this is going to be hard to do politically, but unless the federal government plucks up its courage and repositions itself in the business of being a key leader and financier—because it is a key financier of the post-secondary training and other learning that people require—we won't have the kind of system that we need to be competitive as this century unfolds.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Thank you.

Now to Mr. Brown for the last five minutes of this round.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Thank you.

One comment I think I heard Mr. Caplan and Mr. Crawford mention was a collaboration among governments. Obviously with three levels of government, Canada has a unique challenge, in the sense that we have many people serving the same constituents, and these would overlap in jurisdiction.

Regardless of your partisan stripe, I think everyone wants to work on more collaboration. Are there any areas you can think of specifically where a lack of collaboration is leading to inefficiencies or an inadequate level of service?

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** In five minutes? I'll give you one example.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** That's the first question.

Mr. Caplan, like you, I come from a background as a municipal councillor. I spent five years in Barrie and I can appreciate what you're saying, seen from the perspective of a city councillor.

There's a second question I would like people to comment on. In Montreal on Wednesday, the committee wanted deputations from the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses. They said that because of tax rates, small businesses in particular aren't given enough revenue that they can actually invest in training. They said a cut to small business taxes will lead to more money for training.

Could I have comments on both the collaboration and what the CFIB said about small business taxes?

**Mr. Marvin Caplan:** I resigned as a member of the CFIB because I found their questions and the slant on the information they gave to ask people for answers was so right wing and so pro anti-social justice, it was unbelievable. The CFIB has found a way of selling enough memberships to give itself some clout, but I think their intellectual rigour is somewhat lacking.

As far as the downloading goes, unfortunately it's a provincial example, but I'm going to give you one. You've heard a lot about persons with mental disabilities. The City of Hamilton used to give a monthly bus pass, charged back to the province for persons with disabilities, to go and be part of the community. That monthly bus pass, if I recall correctly, was about \$60.

Today that bus pass is no longer allowed. They have to take a form to their physician, the physician has to sign the form for every trip that is not work-related; it needs to be health-related. The truth of the matter is that everybody at this table is going to tell you that working is health-related.

However, be that as it may, now you're expecting people with mental disabilities to carry around pieces of paper, ask their physician to sign them every time they take the bus, and then they have to take them to the person they are going to and have that person sign the forms. Then after they've been signed, they have to go into an office where someone audits every single sheet, and then has to go back and question.

Believe me, it costs a lot more money. Instead of saving money, what the provincial government has done on this issue has just frustrated the whole idea of doing it. The municipality was prepared to subsidize it, but the rules were so tough—because we're going to make sure that no one cheats. In saving people from cheating, they've cost us far more money. That's an example.

The federal government got out of the housing business, and look what happened. Very few people are building rentals or accommodations for persons with disabilities or low incomes to help them maintain their dignity and stay part of the workforce.

There was some questioning about how I could be talking about fiscal responsibilities. Don't I have a heart? The truth is that helping

people to be part of our society and contributing to it, at the end of the day, should save us money. At the end of the day, I believe those kinds of things should be worked out amongst the federal, provincial, and municipal governments without looking at whose party is in power.

The other brief point is that when we are appointing people to work on these commissions, boards, and so on—federally, municipally, and provincially—it is often the case that the persons who have helped the party the most get the appointments. That is wrong, and I can tell you a number of instances. What we have to do is not find the best person who served the party in power, but the best party to work on these issues.

Thank you.

● (1150)

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Mr. Crawford wants to answer. Again, please answer quickly.

**Mr. Cameron Crawford:** Since Meech Lake, I think we've sort of strayed into a kind of hands-off federalism. I'm not advocating going back to the good old days of the Canada Assistance Plan, because there were definite problems there. But at least the federal, provincial, and territorial levels of government were at the same table and did have to put their heads together to figure out how and whether to finance very practical supports that people with disabilities need: wheelchairs, attendant services, sign language interpreters, and so on.

What's happened in the past decade is that the federal government has been saying, well, over to you, and there really hasn't been a meaningful federal involvement in the programming around disability supports.

For at least a decade now, the issue of disability supports hasn't been the only priority, but it's been the single most important priority within the disability community, and there's been virtually no progress on this file. This is a key result of there being a lack of engagement by federal and provincial/territorial partners in this area, which is an absolutely vital concern to the disabled community.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours):** Thank you very much, Mr. Brown.

That's the end of our meeting this morning.

I would like to thank each and every one of you who has been before us for your different presentations and for your answers to the different questions of the members. I'm sure that will help us very much in the preparation of our report. Thank you again, and have a good day.

The meeting is adjourned.







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