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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

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• (1700)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

The clerk has advised me that we have a quorum and that all witnesses, as well as those members attending virtually, have been sound tested and are good to go.

Welcome to meeting number 84 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee is meeting on its study of the Canada summer jobs wage subsidy program. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. This means there will be people appearing in this room, as well as joining us virtually.

You have the option to speak in the official language of your choice. For those appearing virtually, you have the translation icon at the bottom of your screen. It's the world symbol. Click on whichever language you wish to participate in. For those in the room, use your earpiece and choose the language of your choice.

If there is an interruption in the translation, please get my attention by raising your hand. On the screens, use the "raise hand" icon. I'll suspend while it's being corrected.

I would like to remind witnesses and members to speak slowly and clearly for the benefit of the interpreters. Please keep your earpiece away from the mike—this prevents popping in the sound system—for the protection of our translation team.

Appearing in panel one today, from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peterborough, we have Brent Shepherd, executive director, by video conference. From Peterborough Musicfest, we have Tracey Randall, general manager, by video conference. From the Nutty Bean Cafe, we have Sherry Salminen, owner-manager, by video conference. From the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education, appearing in the room, we have Devon Jones, founding director, and Christopher Emmanuel, youth representative.

I will begin with the executive director, Brent Shepherd, and an opening statement of five minutes. I will ask all participants to keep their comments as close to five minutes as possible.

We'll begin with Mr. Shepherd. You have five minutes for your opening statement.

Go ahead.

Mr. Brent Shepherd (Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peterborough): Thank you for the invitation to be here today.

As you heard, I'm the executive director for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peterborough is a well known non-profit in the Peterborough area that empowers young individuals in our community. Our mission is to foster positive mentoring relationships between young people and caring mentors, to enable them to reach their full potential. We've done this for decades—since 1960—in the Peterborough area. Our organization has played a vital role in the development of young minds, and offers programs and camps that help shape the lives of the youth that we serve.

The Canadian summer jobs wage subsidy program has had a profound and positive impact on our agency, providing valuable opportunities to young people in our community. By offering the subsidies to us, it's a program that empowers organizations like ourselves to create summer positions that not only benefit the local youth but also enable us to enhance our services.

The following are a few ways that has taken place.

First, we have summer programming and camps that we offer. Often, we offer these to children who are on a wait-list, waiting for a mentor to be matched. The summer wage subsidy program has allowed us to expand our summer programming. It allows us to increase our ratios of children to supervisors, and it helps make them more accessible to a larger range of individual children. This has enabled us to engage in a variety of ways and offer summer programming opportunities. It provides a safe and supportive environment for the youth in Peterborough.

Another way is through our mentoring match support. As we match volunteers with children, that requires us to continue to monitor those relationships so that they remain positive. This subsidy helps us to facilitate the hiring of post-secondary students who are enrolled in a certificate or degree program directly related to the work that we do, ensuring that the mentoring relationships that we facilitate remain at the highest standard possible. This, in turn, has a positive impact on the lives of the children, the young people.

Following that, the valuable experience for young people that also takes place is with those students, and it provides them the benefit of our organization being able to invest in them in a meaningful way. It offers them the opportunity to gain valuable experience within the community that they are either schooled in or have returned to after moving away for school. It provides them with essential skills, improves their employability and supports a sense of responsibility in their community engagement.

While we have these positive opportunities, there are a few areas that I think would be valuable for improvement.

One is providing increased flexibility in the timing and hours. This would allow students, particularly those enrolled in post-secondary education, to be able to spread out their work hours across a broader timeline. This flexibility is crucial for students who wish to combine their summer job experience with other part-time employment or academic commitments.

The other would be a longer duration of the grants. Extending the duration of those grants from eight to 10 weeks to 11 or 12 weeks would be immensely beneficial. College and university students, in particular, are often seeking employment for a longer duration during the summer months. Offering those grants for a broader time attracts more of those students, allowing a more comprehensive summer experience in their related fields and increasing their skill development.

In conclusion, we're looking at how immensely beneficial it is and just offering opportunities to expand that. It provides a very meaningful opportunity, both for the kids that we serve in the community and also for those students for whom we're looking to try to increase the amount of job experience and employable experience that they get moving forward.

Thank you very much.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd.

Ms. Randall, you have five minutes.

Ms. Tracey Randall (General Manager, Peterborough Musicfest): Thank you to the House of Commons and our MP, Michelle Ferreri, for having me.

I have been the general manager here at Peterborough Musicfest for 12 years. We host 18 nights of music with free admission in our beautiful downtown, at a local four-acre park, every Wednesday and Saturday. We try to bring premier, diverse artists to town. We've been doing this for 36 years, starting in 1987.

Actually, I was a student driving a boat around for the first two years of the summer festival. I moved away for 30 years and have come back. I really enjoy what I do here for our community and how much the community relies on this festival year after year. It brings a lot of therapeutic.... During the pandemic we had to stop, and we are really appreciative that we were able to bring it back last year after 37 months away.

We did that thanks to funders. We are provided local sponsorships of upwards of \$300,000. Then we get other funding through grants from the municipality, county and city, as well as provincial

and federal, such as the Canada summer jobs grant, which we're here today to speak to.

I'm very proud of where we've come from. We move from three employees in the winter months to 15, because we set up and tear down every night at the park. We bring upwards of 10,000 people to Peterborough each night, which totals upwards of 120,000 for the entire summer. We're just really happy to get people back into our restaurants. They're spending money through the cottage area, renting Airbnbs, staying in our hotels over three nights and enjoying the cottage country that we offer throughout our region. We want to continue to do so.

I'm just really proud of where we've come from and how far we've increased the capacity and the genres of music. We've brought hip hop, we have local bands and we bring the likes of Big Wreck and Tom Cochrane. This year we had Little River Band. We're just really proud of how far we've come with free music. Normally, people are paying \$100 to \$150 a ticket to see this type of artist.

We just really want to thank you, as well, for promoting us and supporting us over the years. We've really relied on this grant. We watch the students that have been hired through this grant become new people. They always come back to me eight or 10 years later to say that it was the best summer they ever had. The odd time we'll have a student come back a couple of years in a row. We just know that we're putting them out into the world with growth in a large event experience, which they'll never see again.

It's an amazing experience, and I'm just so proud of where we've come with these Canada summer jobs students.

Thank you so much for having me today.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Randall.

Is it Mr. Jones, Mr. Emmanuel or both who are going to give the five minutes?

Mr. Devon Jones (Founding Director, Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education): Do we each get five minutes, or are we sharing five minutes?

The Chair: You get two and a half each. It's a total of five. You can split it.

Mr. Devon Jones: I'll start and Mr. Emmanuel will finish.

My name is Devon Jones. I'm a schoolteacher with the Toronto District School Board. I work in the Jane and Finch corridor. I've done so for some time. I'm essentially assigned staff who looks at issues around public safety as they relate to gun violence in youth. I'm also the founding director of the Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education. The acronym is YAAACE.

Over the years, YAAACE has provided infrastructure around family support, employment and training, learning and education, case management, public safety, academics and expanded opportunities in athletics.

Canada summer jobs are conducive for us twofold. Firstly, we get a chance to hire young people and provide them with opportunities they wouldn't normally have. A case in point is the current executive director of YAAACE, who is also a professor at Laurier. His first job was through this initiative.

The efficacy of this program is obvious. We get a chance to hire a number of young people who are themselves from the community. They come to the program and then serve as mentors, teachers and instructors. Chris, for example, worked this summer in the capacity of a student teacher, working with hundreds of youth over the course of the summer. The efficacy of the program speaks for itself.

The program is also amazing because we get a chance to provide kids from one of the poorest communities in the country with opportunities for recreational programming and school through the community school initiative, which is a program we run with the Ministry of Education. We provide them with this opportunity that they wouldn't normally be able to afford.

Through the TDSB, we have certified teachers that we can use to address this gap in achievement. We can provide this ecosystem that provides young people with a viable alternative to guns and gangs.

The program, for us, makes a lot of sense. The efficacy speaks for itself. The only suggestion I would make is, firstly, that the program become year-round. Secondly, like the first speaker said, the duration should be somewhat longer.

• (1710)

Mr. Christopher Emmanuel (Youth Representative, Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education): Good evening.

My name is Christopher Emmanuel. I am a student at the University of Toronto studying accounting. I'm pursuing a degree in that field.

I have been a part of YAAACE for the past eight years and a part of the working team for the past four.

Some of my most memorable moments at YAAACE were not just of the athletic or academic sides of it, but of the mentors we had growing up. Having people who looked like us and people who grew up in that same neighbourhood really showed and gave us the opportunity to look at what we could be in the future as young Black men in these types of areas.

I have been a part of this wonderful team helping young African American youth really strive to be the best possible versions of themselves in their academics. As Mr. Jones spoke about, these past two years I've helped by becoming a student teacher in the math department for our grade eights. They've been working toward a grade nine math credit, so that they'll have that before entering their four years of high school. I've really enjoyed the job. It has really been very beneficial, and not just for me but for my peers and colleagues.

People I've grown up with are still part of the YAAACE team and are still a part of a team where they can benefit not just from making money during the summer or things like that, but from be-

ing able to put money toward their tuition or by helping young kids growing up by showing them role models and being those role models for them.

It has been a great opportunity to be part of this team, and it has benefited me in so many ways. It was my first job, and it is still one of the best experiences I've ever had, coming up from being a camper to now being a student teacher helping push the next generation to somewhat resemble me and continue to push for their dreams and achieve their goals—not just athletically but academically.

The Chair: Thank you so much for your opening presentation.

We had a fourth presenter, but we've lost them in the cyberspace.

Just before we go to the questioning round, I want to advise the committee that we have resources for the full two hours. We'll be going for the full two hours to get everybody in. I will remind members that I will keep you pretty close to your time allotments, because the last time we lost a couple, which was not fair.

To begin the first round of questioning, we have Ms. Ferreri for six minutes, please.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. It's great to hear your feedback and it's obviously nice to have Peterborough represented. I'm proud that way.

I think there was a theme. It was really powerful to hear you, Mr. Jones and Mr. Emmanuel, talk about the power of mentorship alongside Big Brothers Big Sisters. It's really great to see that—without planning it—highlighted today. I think it's one of the things our kids and our future need more than anything in terms of mental health.

Going back to Canada summer jobs, I'm going to start, if I can, with Tracey Randall from Peterborough Musicfest.

Congratulations on all that you guys have achieved. It is Canada's largest free outdoor concert, and it's incredible, in Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

You have some recommendations, Tracey, which we can put in the report, of what you would like to see improved in the program. Can you share those with us?

• (1715)

Ms. Tracey Randall: Thank you, Michelle.

Yes, certainly. I've been in this program for 10 years, and it's come a long way. I'm very thankful for things that I have seen, such as increasing the age to under 30. That has really helped, and we appreciate that we can bring students in from our local Fleming and Trent school facilities, which are so important to me because I'm an alum. I was in the tourism program.

I love to bring in people from Fleming, but one issue we had this year was that we wanted to bring in international students to show diversity. It's something we would like to do, and Fleming is increasing in the number of international students. The program that I was in currently has only six domestic students. We hired a lovely girl from east India. We had a work permit, and we were turned down because she wasn't a Canadian citizen.

My question to you is this: On a job posting, how will I specify that candidates must be Canadian citizens, when I'm looking for diversity and when there are all these wonderful people who have come into Canada as new Canadian citizens? That's one thing that I'm stuck on, and I just don't want to have to put that on the posting.

Also, it would be good to have an answer back earlier, as you've been hearing from quite a few of the grant holders. Obviously, we are trying to hire before April 15. Our season starts in June, and, if we don't get those students in here and hired, we lose out. Most of them are keen, and they already have jobs by the time we receive confirmation on our funding. They've already been hired by other businesses. This year our successes were based on people who left those jobs and came and joined us when they saw the job posting. I don't like to hear that they were hired elsewhere and then quit and came our way, so I think it's important that you try to get us an answer back at least by April 15.

Thank you.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much. That's great.

I have about five minutes to ask questions, so if I seem fast or rushed, that's the issue there.

Could you expand a little bit, Tracey—I do want to get to Brent and ask him a question too—did the folks at Canada summer jobs explain to you about the new Canadians? Was that clearly communicated to you? Did you feel supported in the program? Did you feel that it was easy to navigate and to get through to a person when you were dealing with these kinds of questions?

Ms. Tracey Randall: It was very easy to get hold of somebody—thank you—yes, and we did hear back fairly quickly. We had to get some proof of citizenship and send it over, and we thought it would be clearly accepted. They were quite good to help us and get us through it. It's just hard, when we've already hired the students, to let them go, so we kept them on. Obviously we thought that they were great workers, so we just kept them on.

I am just afraid, moving forward, of asking for only Canadian citizens when we have all these people in this program who are international students, and they're great workers. But, yes, I had great support from the Canada summer jobs staff.

Thank you.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you for that.

Brent at Big Brothers Big Sisters Peterborough, I love what you do. I think it's invaluable.

If you didn't have this funding from Canada summer jobs, how would you fund these positions?

Mr. Brent Shepherd: We would have to try to find ways to fund the position. It's critical funding for us. When we look at our budget

over the year, in some cases, we would have to go without hiring a student. We would have to try to make it work with the staff we currently have, and that would affect the number of children and young people we could have in our program in the summer, as I mentioned at the beginning with regard to ratios.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Brent. I don't mean to cut you off.

Mr. Brent Shepherd: No, it's okay.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I just have one last question for both you and Tracey.

The way the criteria is broken down with Canada summer jobs is that only 10% of the scoring criteria is given to local priorities, and 90% is given on a national level. Obviously, local is critical. It's what makes up the country, so I would ask you this: Would you like to have on the record for the report that you would like to see that 10% increased, that scoring criteria to be valued more, for local incentives and local programming, so that you get a higher value in the scoring for Canada summer jobs to be eligible for the grant because of your local component and what you offer locally?

I'll ask Tracey first.

Ms. Tracey Randall: Absolutely, that should be increased. I grew up in this town, and I would not be where I am if I did not have music in my life. Definitely we need to increase that. I want to hire local people and I do. We have five positions that we normally apply for, and we have two coming back. They are students who were raised here. They're athletes, and they love music. We're very much an arts town, so please increase that, absolutely, Michelle.

Thank you.

• (1720)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks.

I'll go to you, Brent.

Mr. Brent Shepherd: I would also support that. Again, we serve our local community and try to do that with excellence. We are finding, similar to Tracey, that the students are from university and college. We have to get them early, and they're often local—so yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Now we have Mr. Van Bynen for six minutes.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be splitting some of my time with Mr. Coteau. I only have three minutes to work with, so I would ask for concise and crisp answers.

I really respect what's happening with Big Brothers Big Sisters. You've been active in York Region. You do some great things for the community, and the support that you're providing youth is critical to building our community.

I will ask you a question, Brent, as I've heard some mixed information here with respect to the scoring data, about how the data is scored and what the process is. When you complete your applications, would it be helpful to know more specifically what both the local and the federal Canada summer jobs priorities are and how they are scored so that you can ensure that your programs align better with these priorities? Do you know how your applications are scored and how they're prioritized, and would that be helpful, because there's some confusion?

I'm hearing that 10% local is not an accurate number. Would it be helpful for you to have that information?

Mr. Brent Shepherd: Clarity is always helpful. I think it promotes honesty and integrity in the process.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Chair, I request that the minister provide this committee with a report to outline how applications are reviewed and scored, and clarify how they are prioritized for funding so that there's a clear understanding of how the process works.

Do I need unanimous consent? If so, I would ask for unanimous consent for that information.

The Chair: I see a consensus. Do you want me to direct that in a letter to the minister so it comes back for the record?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Yes, please. That would be good.

The Chair: We don't have it yet. You'll have to submit it.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: It's not a motion. It's just a request.

The Chair: It's just a request. Okay.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Are we okay with that? It's to get an outline so that everybody has a good understanding of how the program works. I think a little information would be very helpful—

The Chair: On the point system...?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Yes, it's on the point system, how they're scored and how they're reviewed.

The Chair: I'll have the clerk prepare that and share it with the committee members for comment before it's sent.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Thank you.

The Chair: There seems to be consensus, Mr. Van Bynen, so that will be fine.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Thank you.

I'll turn it over to Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you so much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Mr. Jones and Mr. Emmanuel. Thank you for being here today.

I know Mr. Jones from my work at the Toronto District School Board, but also at the ministry of children and youth services. I was surprised to see him here today. I didn't know he was coming.

I'm so happy to see you, because I know you'll bring a lot of value to this discussion. I know some of the work you do is among the best, not only in the city of Toronto but throughout this country, when it comes to building opportunities for young people in some

challenging neighbourhoods. I want to say thank you for all the work you're doing—both of you—because I know you've changed lives.

Mr. Jones, I know you mentioned that prolonging the program might be a way to improve the overall opportunity that the Canada student jobs program brings. Are there any other recommendations that you can provide to the committee on how we can improve the program overall to better meet the needs of your program?

Mr. Devon Jones: Definitely. Hiring young people earlier definitely makes sense. In addition to that, the duration could be somewhat longer, like the level of flexibility that was afforded the program during COVID. That was somewhat viable. In communities where you have high unemployment rates, it really would do the program justice if we could definitely hire year-round. I can't speak enough to that. We have kids coming up to us on a daily basis looking for work, especially in a neighbourhood like the one we work in. It has the highest rate of crime and gang involvement in the country, and young people are looking for another viable alternative. The fact is that, if we can hire year-round, that would definitely help.

● (1725)

Mr. Michael Coteau: I remember a report you put out a few years ago that said that \$70 million was spent in the Jane and Finch community, and another \$70 million in the Lawrence Heights community on policing, incarcerating people in those neighbourhoods. That's separately, \$70 million each. That was a report from about seven years ago.

Mr. Devon Jones: Yes.

Mr. Michael Coteau: These investments, I think, make a difference in communities. Rather than spend money at the tail end of a cycle, you "up front" the money and give young people opportunity. It makes sense to invest more. Compared with other programs out there, such as the focus on youth program and others you may use, is this program...?

Ms Chabot's purpose in doing this study is for us to learn more about what's happening on the ground, make recommendations and make the program better. We're not here to cut the program. We're here to review it and make improvements.

Is there anything else we can do to improve this program, in comparison to other programs like the Ontario focus on youth program?

Mr. Devon Jones: The program works for us, outside of the few issues we mentioned before around sustainability and flexibility. In comparison to, say, focus on youth.... These are pretty much the same initiatives.

The piece around the ability to hire locally is something we also have to explore. We would definitely like the ability to hire more. We hire a lot. Last year, it was 35. This year, it was 26. We hire a lot of youth each year, and we have to turn away kids. I would definitely like the ability to hire as many young people as possible.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Coteau.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for six minutes

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank all our witnesses for their testimony.

We can see the richness of their programs in their respective localities, and these programs are very important. I want to make it clear that the committee's study is in no way intended to call the Canada Summer Jobs program into question. On the contrary, their testimony confirms that this program is very important for each of our communities. Without taking anything away from other organizations, it greatly helps non-profit organizations, or NPOs, which are the biggest beneficiaries, to carry out their projects.

The program serves a dual purpose: it helps young people gain experience and expertise, and it allows the organizations that hire them to take the time to invest in them. The committee does not question this.

I'm happy to see how we could improve this program. There have been two pandemic years, during which the program has been substantially revised in certain circumstances. However, the latest program has seen a significant decline compared to the pandemic years. This had a negative impact on several organizations, at least those in my riding. For example, some had requested funding for a position, but only received one. This sometimes calls the project into question.

Witnesses have talked a lot about the number of weeks of employment, and they're not the only ones who have. Often, the program will grant eight weeks when the organization would need 10 to 12 weeks. That's why we need to review the program's funding, if we think it's important.

My question is for all of the witnesses. Do you agree that funding should be increased to better meet needs?

Mr. Shepherd, would you like to respond first?

Mr. Brent Shepherd: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

Yes, I believe that would be beneficial. It would allow for the increase of time over the summer months. It would also help facilitate some of the flexibility.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Ms. Randall, do you have any comments on this?

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Randall: Thank you.

Yes, please, we would love the funding to be enhanced. We run for 12 weeks. We used to get 10 weeks. Moving back to eight—with, obviously, the minimum wage moving up—has been good for

us, because we've been able to give our youth more funding. We appreciate that.

We know they are coming on board to have the experience of a lifetime at Musicfest, but we would also like to see them not at home. We want them working. Over the pandemic, as we all know, some of them did not work and did not want to come back. We're very thankful to be able to offer them this.

Thank you, Madame. We would prefer a little more funding, or another, longer term.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Ms. Randall.

Mr. Jones, what are your observations?

[*English*]

Mr. Devon Jones: Yes, we would definitely like a longer term. That would help us in our ability to hire.

Also, for example, let's say that you submit your application and it's agreed that you're allocated, say, 10 spots. I would like the ability to add additional spots. As it stands right now, the allocation is the allocation. We would like the ability to hire more, because if you have 10 spots and you have more kids registered for camp, you want to make the camp bigger. Also, you have young people who want to work, but you don't have the ability to pay them. If the program could have that level of flexibility, that would be awesome.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have a minute and a half left.

Ms. Louise Chabot: All right, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Jones, there will be another Canada Summer Jobs program. For the one last year, was there a discrepancy between the number of positions you applied for and the number you were awarded under the Canada Summer Jobs program? Did you receive less funding? If so, did this have an impact on your work?

[*English*]

Mr. Devon Jones: We got fewer than the number requested. I think we requested 45. We got somewhere around 26 or so. Based on the allocation and the space, with the way the classrooms are structured, the gym is structured and the outdoor activities are structured, we then had to say to campers that we couldn't accommodate them at camp. We had to say to young people we wanted to hire that we couldn't hire them, because we didn't have the amount of resources to hire all those people.

That's where the flexibility comes in, where we could go back to the summer jobs program and say, "Listen, this is the number of young people we have who we would like to hire." They're stuck on "your number's your number", you know.

I know that other camps had to give money back because they couldn't run their camps. There's obviously a surplus in other areas. Why not reallocate those surpluses so we can use them to run a more successful camp?

This summer was a tough one for us, based on the fact that we had to turn campers away in a community where, if kids are running the streets, we all know all too well what the outcome is going to be. That's somewhat tragic and detrimental. We'd like that flexibility to be able to say, "We have all these kids in camp and this is the number we need."

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

Next we have Ms. Zarrillo for six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

Actually, Mr. Emmanuel, it's the first time we've had an opportunity to talk to students, so I'm going to ask you a few questions, if that's all right. You're the first witness who is actually a student who has gone through the program.

The Canada summer jobs grants define the goal as providing "flexible and holistic services" to help youth in Canada "develop the skills and gain paid work experience to successfully transition into the labour market". We've heard from organizations that there are lots of opportunities for employment.

One of the things I am interested in as part of this study is what other things youth are in need of in regard to getting into the labour force. Besides the work, are there other things the Government of Canada could offer? The one I've been thinking about is tax information: disability tax credit eligibility or other tax credit eligibility. I'm just wondering if you could share with us if there are other things that you think could be involved in the summer jobs grants that would help youth transition to the labour market.

• (1735)

Mr. Christopher Emmanuel: Yes, I definitely believe so, like you said there are the tax benefits and what they do.

For myself, I would say there's definitely the ability to be able to be placed in a field where you have a goal in mind, and you have something that you are trying to achieve. For example, I want to be an accountant, so it's being able to be placed in a place where there are things like math going on and the ability to learn from great educators and all those different opportunities.

I know a lot of youth who would love to work somewhere where they could work with younger kids or youth, but those types of spots are very limited due to the fact that money is going to different places and allocated to other avenues. I think being able to be put in a position where you could work towards something that you're passionate about, and you have a goal for... I know many youth, especially those who work for YAAACE, want to be teachers when they grow up. Last year, I believe, we had two counsellors who wanted to be teachers and to have it on their resumé that they worked with YAAACE to help push kids to different limits and boundaries in that educational field really helped get them those jobs and the experience that they greatly needed.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: That's interesting because I'm thinking about networks now. For networking or being able to do post-networking, is it something that you've seen offered through the summer jobs grant or have you been able to make networks outside of the job?

Mr. Christopher Emmanuel: Yes, definitely. For example, one of the big networks I'm with right now is the Pinball Clemons Foundation, which is helping students of marginalized communities get free education for university. You have to keep a certain grade and you get that opportunity to go to university and to study in the field you're after.

Being with YAAACE—I've really been only with them—it's opened a lot of opportunities for me. For example, even being here is a great opportunity I don't think I'd ever have if I wasn't part of this organization. The summer jobs and just being part of something that is more than just the sports or the academics is very good, especially for young people.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I'm not sure if I captured it properly, but I think you said it's been eight years you've been going through camp and doing the teaching.

Mr. Christopher Emmanuel: Yes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: I wanted to talk a little bit about persons with disabilities, and I'm just wondering if you could share your experiences. Are you seeing persons with disabilities coming through the camp, or on accessibility needs, have you seen any barriers that way? There's also an opportunity for supplements around disabilities, so I'm just wondering if that's something that you've experienced or seen increase over the years.

Mr. Devon Jones: By disability, do you mean physical or learning disability?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Actually, any type of disability.

Mr. Christopher Emmanuel: From my personal experience, I haven't seen any disabilities come through the camp. It's very accepting. We would definitely accommodate for those who have those disabilities, but from my personal experience, I haven't seen this, especially physically because it's a very rigid program. It's athletic sports. However, we accommodate everyone's needs, where they're at and where they want to be, and then we guide them to that place where they would like to be at the end of that summer.

Even with the academic part, we have had kids who don't learn as fast as maybe some of their peers. For example, I would sometimes take a group of kids and bring them to a room and work with them and go at their own pace. Whatever they may need help with, whatever they're struggling with that others may not be, we accommodate for them because we also don't want them to be looked at differently because they may be getting special treatment or they may be a little slower than the other kids. We take them in that confined space and make sure that they're going at their pace, that they don't feel rushed and that they don't feel any type of...especially from the other kids. We just work with them in those aspects.

• (1740)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

Mr. Devon Jones: I'm sorry. Let me speak to—

The Chair: Mr. Jones, you'll have to catch it in the next round. I have to stay close to the timeline.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you. I'll get you on my next round.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, go ahead for five minutes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Mr. Jones had some stuff he wanted to add to that.

I'll ask you a couple of questions and try to get everything in five minutes.

I'm curious about how you track yourself. How long have you been using the Canada summer jobs program?

Mr. Devon Jones: We have since its inception.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: How do you track the success of that? Do you keep a log of what's happened to the students who took those jobs?

Mr. Devon Jones: Definitely. My executive director is a professor and researcher, so we document the process and the trajectory of all the campers, for starters. We have a treasure trove of information. We just did a comprehensive study with the faculty of education at Laurier around the capacity and aptitude of the kids who have gone through our program. We have that research.

For students who have gone through as our mentors, we also document their tenure with us and where they go next. A lot of our kids have the opportunity to go to post-secondary through a bursary program offered by the Pinball Clemons Foundation.

We actually measure and document, so we have it.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's incredible.

Mr. Devon Jones: Yes, 100%.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: What would you say if I told you that, when we asked Stats Canada—the government that hands out this money—about this program, they don't even measure it? Would you agree that measuring—having the tools for measurements of success—is critical?

That's how you quantify the success of something. Obviously, your program has done that and done it very well.

Mr. Devon Jones: Definitely.

Ironically, I met with some professors last week at York: Joseph Mensah and one of my colleagues, Christopher Williams. They wrote a book about their research called “Boomerang Ethics”. They were doing consultation for Stats Canada and asking them some of these pointed questions. They don't track or measure.

The luxury of having a researcher in-house who documents and tracks everything—sometimes it's a bit much—means that we can always speak quantitatively to what's taking place and to the efficacy of our program.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I commend you for doing that.

I think when you're using taxpayers' money.... Do you not think it would be critical for the government to do what you're doing? Should they be held accountable on their end to ensure the success of this program?

Mr. Devon Jones: Definitely, because you have agencies that.... There always has to be an accountability matrix in place for anything you do. If you run a program, there has to be an accountability matrix. If you're taking taxpayers' money, you have to demonstrate efficacy. You have to prove what you're doing. You have to demonstrate what you're doing.

We would love to help with that research aspect. We'd love to put that matrix in place for Canada summer jobs. We have a template in place that we use in-house at YAAACE, and we'd love to share.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I'm very impressed with what you're offering and what you're doing. You're definitely on the upstream end of changing the trajectory of those at most risk. Thank you for what you do.

We're hearing you too, Christopher. It's pretty powerful to hear from a student who's done the program.

I want to ask Brent one final question, but I don't know how much time I have left here.

The Chair: It's a minute and a half.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Brent, you're from the Big Brothers Big Sisters club, which is also amazing. One thing you touched on was a longer duration of grants. One thing we've heard repeatedly from witnesses is that they're not hearing back in time. There's not enough runway to get the people employed. As a mom, I know my kids struggle. They don't have those social skills. They're behind because of COVID. They're afraid to apply for jobs.

How are you finding the people who are applying? Are you getting a high number of applicants? Do you think that, if they gave you answers earlier—on how much funding you got—it would be helpful in your securing of quality talent?

• (1745)

Mr. Brent Shepherd: Thank you for the question.

It's similar to Tracey's response earlier. Finding talent early is critical, because often—especially when they're keen—they try to source those opportunities early.

One thing we find, too, is that we're having to think through whether we put an asterisk on our job posting that says, “if the funding is available”. It's pretty tough. We don't like to put them in that position, and we don't like to be in that position, either.

It's very important that we hear early, so we can provide.... For example, some of the kids—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I'm sorry, Brent.

What date would you like—on the record, just for reference? What would be the ideal date to hear back by?

Mr. Brent Shepherd: I think Tracey mentioned that as early as April 15 is helpful. The students are already finding opportunities by then, but that's at least a positive direction.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Mr. Long, you have five minutes.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon to my colleagues.

Thank you to our witnesses for coming in. I have just a few points for clarification.

My great colleague MP Chabot made a comment that the program was drastically cut. I would actually disagree with that. I don't think it was drastically cut at all. We returned the program to prepandemic levels. We increased the program during the pandemic to accommodate employers and students who needed help, and then we brought it back to prepandemic levels, which, for the record, is double what the previous Conservative government offered to students.

It's an amazing, wonderful program. We've hired just short of 3,000 students in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay and put \$9 million into our economy through students.

I'm curious to hear from all three of you. I'd ask each of you to share how many students you hire and what percentage the Canada summer jobs program is of that number. Do you also have a provincial program through which you hire students?

Go ahead, Mr. Jones.

Mr. Devon Jones: Last summer, I think we hired somewhere around 50 youth, and 26 of those were through Canada summer jobs. We had some through the TDSB focus on youth initiative and the TCDSB initiative, which is a similar spinoff of focus on youth.

I would say a little over half of the kids we hire are usually through Canada summer jobs.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Brent Shepherd: We have hired anywhere from—we're small—one to three students while I've been the executive director. All of the funding comes from Canada summer jobs.

Mr. Wayne Long: Go ahead, Ms. Randall.

Ms. Tracey Randall: We hire 10, and four are covered by Canada summer jobs. That's 40%. I've seen an increase in funding over my decade here. I'm very appreciative that, postpandemic, it came back, just like it did in 2019, so thank you.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you.

Mr. Jones, was your experience through the portal a good experience? Was it cumbersome when you actually had to go through the process of applying?

Mr. Devon Jones: My admin team is tasked with that, and I've had no complaints. There's a level of proficiency because they've done it over a period of time. They'd be best suited to answer that, but I haven't heard any complaints.

Mr. Wayne Long: Go ahead, Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Brent Shepherd: It's similar, because it's been done before. I think the standardization of it seems to be fairly straightforward.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Long: Go ahead, Ms. Randall.

• (1750)

Ms. Tracey Randall: It's the same answer. Yes.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you.

Mr. Jones, I want to talk about the timing of the program. In my riding, sometimes I will get calls from employers who applied for the jobs and most likely know they're going to get the jobs, but haven't received the notification yet. I get a call saying, "I'm going to miss out on hiring Susan here because I haven't got the official notice." Sometimes, I cross my fingers and say, "Well, I think you're good." It's a little leap of faith.

Is timing an issue for you, from when you apply to when you actually get notification that you can hire students?

Mr. Devon Jones: Similar to the points that the other deputants have made, it definitely is. If you have someone like Chris, for example, who's a math savant, and I would like to have him work in our advanced math program but he's secured a job someplace else and is waiting on us to solidify and confirm where he's going to be working, I can't tangibly say yes to him. Some years, you might get 25 spots, and some years, you might get four or five. You can't tangibly speak to employability until you get that number, and that number can vary based on whatever variables.

Our MP is awesome and is really accommodating and advocates for the initiative based on the scope of the work that we do, but we never know how much money is going to be allocated to us.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Long.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for two and a half minutes

Ms. Louise Chabot: Several witnesses talked about the flexibility and duration of the program. In terms of restrictions—I'll call it that—several talked about 11 to 12 weeks of employment, or 10 to 12 weeks, which differs from the experience I've had in my riding. It must also be said that we have slightly fewer resources. Going back to what was offered before the pandemic, in our opinion, takes no account of demographics, inflation or the cost of living. That's why an increase in the terms and conditions of the program should be considered.

Mr. Shepherd, do you think the number of weeks has much importance given the type of summer camp you offer? Are the consequences different if the duration of employment is only eight weeks versus 11 or 12 weeks?

[English]

Mr. Brent Shepherd: Thank you.

The duration is important, but the flexibility is also in the way the hours are structured. With its being eight weeks, the students that we hired needed to have alternative employment. We wanted to stretch that over the course of 11 weeks, but we were unable to do so because it reduced the hours underneath the 30-hour requirement over the course of a week. It was that duration. Obviously, if the number of hours increases to allow for a 12-week program, that issue of flexibility goes away. If we're not able to run or if there are not the resources to run a 12-week program, then the flexibility to be able to change the hours, to stretch those hours or to run morning programs instead of all-day programs would also assist. This would allow the student to work for us and for someone else.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot: You spoke—

The Chair: You have 10 seconds left.

Ms. Louise Chabot: The length of the camp must also have an impact on the young people.

Don't you agree?

[English]

Mr. Brent Shepherd: That's correct.

Based on the funding, we try to make our camps and our summer activities flexible. We try to bake in flexibility for our camps so that we can respond appropriately with the type of employment that we are going to be offering or that we receive funding for.

The Chair: Thank you.

We now have Ms. Zarrillo to conclude.

You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you.

I want to open the floor to Mr. Jones to share thoughts around students with disabilities, the supplement that is available and if you've had to use it.

• (1755)

Mr. Devon Jones: We do have a lot of students with learning disabilities. We just don't publicize them. The teacher in the class would know, but we don't really let the student teachers be aware of that.

Our teaching model is quite unique, actually. We have a teacher, sometimes we have two teachers, in the classroom. We also have a high-functioning student in high school or post-secondary—possibly two or three—who is in the classroom providing support to those students who, to Chris's point, are struggling. It is so integrated and encompassing that there isn't the assumption that.... We want to do it without having the student be pulled out or somewhat relegated. We want to do it in the most inclusive way possible.

As a teacher who taught special education for years, I will say that it's impossible to get to all your students. In our program design, as educators and as professors, we ensured that we had a model that was receptive of those students with learning exceptionalities so that we could best accommodate them with that model. It's awesome that you have young people in the classroom who are high functioning and who can go to those students and they look just like them, speak their language, are from their community, understand their swag and understand their reality. It really does make a difference.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: That's wonderful. If you think about the number of skills students are attaining there with summer jobs, that's incredible. I just wonder if there is an opportunity to have subsidies or additional training for your teachers in that space.

Mr. Devon Jones: Definitely. I'll go back to that point. For example, we have a partnership with Sony, where we have a media team that runs a Sony space. That's another piece of experiential learning.

To Ms. Chabot's point, I think that, for high-functioning candidates, there shouldn't be parity as it relates to what you're paying a 16-year-old versus a 30-year-old, so we also have to factor in that piece. If you have a high-functioning young person who is four or five years into university or is in grad school, we can't really pay them \$17 or \$18. If we had the flexibility to pay them significantly more based on their capacity and love of education, that's one of the areas I would add to this program.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you.

The Chair: Christopher, you're an impressive presenter, and you've made a good career choice, I must say.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: Thank you, witnesses. It was really good testimony today.

We will suspend while we bring in the next group of witnesses. Those appearing virtually can exit at their will. To those in the room, thank you for presenting.

We'll suspend for four minutes.

• (1755)

(Pause)

• (1800)

The Chair: Committee members, if you could take your places, we will resume the second panel.

In this panel we have, from Habitat for Humanity Hamilton, Sean Ferris, who is appearing virtually; from Karma Country Camp, Shawna Akerman, who is appearing in the room; and from Société Place Maillardville Society, Gord Pederson, executive director, who is appearing virtually.

We did have a fourth panellist in the first round. They were supposed to appear in this round but we've lost them. However, they have submitted their speaking notes to the committee.

I remind witnesses that you each have five minutes for your opening comments. You can choose to speak in the official language of your choice. You have the interpretation. For those appearing virtually, you can see the interpretation icon at the bottom of your screen—it's the globe icon. Use it to choose the language of your choice.

We will begin with a statement, of five minutes or less, from Mr. Ferris, representing Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Ferris, you have the floor.

● (1805)

Mr. Sean Ferris (Chief Executive Officer, Habitat for Humanity Hamilton): Thank you very much.

On behalf of Habitat for Humanity Hamilton and our board of directors, I just want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

To set the context for my remarks, let me begin by sharing that I represent the Habitat for Humanity Hamilton affiliate, one of 48 Habitat for Humanity affiliates in Canada who work every day to tackle the affordable housing crisis. The scope of the work we do across the country is very large because of the scope of the crisis. Access to skills and talent through the Canada summer jobs program helps us advance that work.

Habitat engages the local community through volunteerism and donations to build new homes and offer affordable mortgages to those who could not otherwise attain home ownership. In Hamilton, we also offer repairs on vacant homes to put them back into affordable housing stock for the city of Hamilton, as well as critical repairs for homeowners who could not otherwise afford those repairs. This year in Hamilton, we are building 17 new homes and are repairing 12.

Finally, we operate a social enterprise, called the ReStore, which pays for operational overhead and ensures that 100% of donations are directed to the delivery of affordable housing.

As an overview of our experience in the program, I would like to share the following: Habitat Hamilton has participated in the Canada summer jobs program for the past eight years. The program has enabled Habitat Hamilton to engage an average of over four youth each year. Those youth have enabled us to further our work both in the Habitat construction program as well as the in the ReStore social enterprise during the summer months.

It's very important to us because, in the summer months, people take vacations. At that time of year, we experience lower volunteerism and lower staffing levels. Furthermore, since schools have a summer break, we experience a decrease in student participation through the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, as well as high school co-operative education programs.

The youth we have employed through the Canada summer jobs program have gained experience in both retail and construction operations. They are exposed to the value of not-for-profit organizations and, working alongside volunteers, the benefits of volunteer-

ing. They learn about the importance of stable housing and, maybe most importantly, they learn the important lessons that people gain from working hard as part of a team. In certain circumstances, we have kept Canada summer job students on board beyond the duration of the program, at our own expense, for a continued mutual benefit.

The program has saved Habitat Hamilton an average of about \$30,000 per year. We would not have hired this many staff, if any staff at all, if not for this program, which would have decreased or delayed our contribution to the affordable housing stock locally.

I'm glad to hear that it sounds like this program will continue. I was going to kindly request that the program continue, but it sounds like that's a non-issue, so I'm happy to hear that.

Based on feedback from my team, I'd like to offer a few suggestions for enhancements to the program, for your consideration.

First, the Canada summer jobs program pays an hourly rate equal to the minimum wage. Habitat for Humanity Hamilton is a living wage employer, both so as to not further exacerbate poverty within our own staff and also to attract higher performing applicants, especially for the construction of our homes. Habitat Hamilton must pay the difference between the amount of the subsidy and the amount we pay our staff, and we would respectfully recommend an increased amount of subsidy to offset the amount we need to pay to meet our compensation standards.

Second, Habitat Hamilton works in several federal ridings. However, the Canada summer jobs program limits the employment of youth to one riding. This limits our ability to commit to the program. If we were able to move Canada summer job students to different build sites, or to different ReStore locations, we would be able to utilize the summer jobs program more and deliver more for our community.

Third, in our work, there are a number of personal protective equipment requirements, such as steel-toed footwear. Offering subsidies for this equipment would help with employing youth.

Fourth, Habitat for Humanity would also benefit from subsidies for employing youth from September to April. We have a variety of special projects and youth who don't necessarily go to school in the conventional time period. As a result, we could certainly take advantage of an expanded time period.

● (1810)

Finally, there are two planned financial reimbursements, to my knowledge. Our cash flow would benefit from a faster repayment schedule.

That's what I have to offer you today. Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ferris.

Ms. Akerman, you have five minutes.

Ms. Shawna Akerman (Chief Executive Officer, Registered Psychotherapist, Karma Country Camp): I'm going to tell a bit of a different story. These are big organizations. I'm a single enterprise here.

I raised two kids with disabilities—with profound hearing loss and cochlear implants. I've used almost every government system in our education boards—in Toronto and the York Region board. As a special ed teacher, I also made a huge impact and change for disabilities. I then turned into a registered psychotherapist, which I do in my day job. I run my non-profit charity summer day camp through the summer.

I have six locations across the GTA. I actually put in nine different grant applications in nine different municipalities and received six of them. I hired 52 employees this summer and ran summer programs for over 100 students. It was quite a big impact.

Throughout the year, through my psychotherapy practice, I continue to keep on a lot of those staff as mentors and role models. I have speech-language pathologists, teachers, occupational therapists and anything that comes out of our community colleges and universities to help people with disabilities.

I, myself, am neurodiverse. I have been through our education system many different ways and I struggle immensely. Your government grant has tons of barriers for me, as does even sitting still here today.

I really love the flexibility of funds. I'd like to be able to hire more people throughout the year. I get students from a few different career colleges. They do their internships and practicums with me throughout the year. I'd like to be able to hire them from January to April to keep the scaffolding and the mentoring going.

I am servicing people with autism for the Autism Ontario program through psychotherapy, through their benefit systems, through passport funding and through ODSP.

My daughter just got a hearing dog. That's through the Lions. That was a six-year wait.

I help parents with the disability tax credit. I have all of that knowledge. I've used every program in our board.

I support the transition from high school into employment. There are 92 government agencies in Ontario that I deal with consistently to try to find funds to help everyone find jobs and keep moving. Everyone is stuck right now in every way, with education and medical. All of our government programs are stuck.

Your summer program is amazing because it gives me 52 staff. However, for those 52 staff, I have every single grant application to fill out—all of the paperwork and six different.... Tony is one of the guys—you are amazing—who came and visited two of my locations. We did some social media stuff together.

I also have a full-time job. I do this part time. Imagine me trying to find a camp director.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: Okay.

Imagine that it is October. I am doing my year-end around six locations.

I hired a camp director this year who is an EA at one of the schools. She was under 30—she is no longer—so I was able to pay her through the summer with that rate. Again, she's an educational assistant in the school system, so she makes a good salary. I gave her a percentage of the profit-sharing at the end. I had no idea how many grants I was going to get when I met her. I had no idea how many camps I could run. I have to get spaces in the schools, but I don't know which municipalities are going to approve me. One gave me three. One gave me 12. One gave me 15. One gave me 22. It was the same application to all of them every single time.

Your applications came out early this year, in December, while I was on my vacation, so during my vacation I filled out all the grants because I didn't want to miss it. Because of my neurodiversity, it takes me a lot longer to do things than other people. There's really no accessibility for that either.

I really love what I'm doing. I'm making a big change in the world. I'm opening up a college of psychotherapy, so I can train more therapists to offer more support.

Throughout the year I use as many programs as I can to get government money from to help as many people as possible. If you did this all year, I could do a lot more with a lot less of my energy.

That's it.

● (1815)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Akerman, for your very candid observations.

We'll now go to Mr. Pederson.

Mr. Gord Pederson (Executive Director, Société Place Maillardville Society): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee. My name is Gord Pederson, and I'm pleased to be speaking today about the importance of the Canada summer jobs program to our organization, the students we hire and the lasting impact on our community.

I am the executive director of Société Place Maillardville Society, a small to mid-sized not-for profit organization that has been serving the community of Maillardville in the city of Coquitlam since 2001. We provide recreation and social programs for a diverse community, made up of a disproportionate number of single-parent, low-income and new Canadian families. The underlying focus of our programs is to provide families with a way to connect to their neighbourhood and feeling like they belong.

The highlight of our year is the beginning of our children's summer day camps program. The secret to the success of our summer day camps is the students we hire through the Canada summer jobs program. Each year, we worry about what the student complement will look like, and each year we are always pleasantly surprised with the quality of students we receive.

As a not-for-profit, we can't afford to match the salaries provided in the surrounding municipal sector, but we are able to provide \$2 to \$4 more per hour than the minimum wage. Although this means we have trouble competing for the most experienced students, we are still able to recruit quality students, often those with less experience but who are eager to be given a chance.

What we are able to provide each student by the end of the program is excellent training, mentorship, positive on-the-job experiences and wonderful memories. We are committed to the personal development of each student, with the intention to either retain them for future employment with us or to help develop their skills for employment elsewhere. Considering that most of our students are coming from our region, we firmly believe we are investing in making them better citizens for our community. Approximately 50% to 60% of our students each year are visible minorities from our community.

In our case, the real winner is our community. During the past summer, we were able to provide an exciting, low-cost and inclusive summer day camp program for approximately 460 children aged six to 12. The community demand for this popular program is extremely high and sold out in three hours, with a 15-person waitlist for each of the eight week-long camps.

For some parents, summer camps may be just an affordable child care option for working parents or a way to keep kids entertained during the summer, but for all the children participating, it becomes a fun, inclusive and engaging way to try new things, meet new friends and make memories that will last a lifetime. Going full circle, I'm proud to acknowledge that, over the years, we have had a number of past participants grow up to become volunteers and summer leaders, giving back to our organization and the community.

Mr. Chair, as your committee discusses the funding level for the 2024 program, please consider that the Canada summer jobs program is more than just a youth employment program. It has a positive, long-lasting impact on organizations and communities alike. For that, we are extremely grateful. The effects of any cuts to our organization will directly impact student staffing levels, training opportunities, program length and/or participant capacity, which would ultimately result in either service cuts or drawing from our society's operational budget to cover shortfalls. To our community, it would mean a reduction in the number of children who would receive the benefits of this valuable service.

In closing, please consider the impact your decision will have not only on the students but to the organizations and communities like mine across Canada.

Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for your time.

• (1820)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pederson, for your opening comments.

We will now open the floor to questions, beginning with Mrs. Gray for six minutes.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for being here. I have a couple of questions, and I'd like to give each of the witnesses an opportunity to answer. I will circulate through and would ask, if possible, to maybe keep your answers a little tight so that we can get through a few things here.

My first question has to do with the application itself. We heard from other witnesses about the onerous part of it and how it maybe times out. It's really difficult. If you're also a senior who isn't really technological or perhaps someone with disabilities, it may not be very inclusive and accessible.

I'm just wondering if you can speak to the application itself and the time that it takes.

I will start first with Habitat for Humanity and then we'll go down the line.

Mr. Sean Ferris: I am fortunate enough not to submit the applications; however, the feedback from the team is that there is a learning curve to go through. Given that we've been in the program for a number of years, I would comment that we have learned and that the program has improved. It's not that it's not onerous but rather that we're used to it. It is repetitive, so we save our answers from the previous year and we reuse them. We have staff and volunteers who can support us in that effort.

Always streamlining a process and making it easier is something that we would support.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Great. Thank you.

Next, I'll go to Karma Country Camp.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: I would love it if you could keep our applications every year and renew them instead of filling out all of the same pieces. If you are doing it in different municipalities, can we have one big one, and then the different directives or whatever they're looking for could be separate applications.

Also, too, for the roles and responsibilities, you need to fill out like five different pieces for each role. Sometimes over the summer I want to do 10 roles per location, and 10 times nine is a lot. Is there a way that I can...? Again, I copy and paste it, but it takes time, and I do it myself. Funds for a team would be great.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you.

We'll go over to Mr. Pederson.

Mr. Gord Pederson: I've been doing this process for quite a number of years, and what I must admit is that it has improved a lot over time. It used to be that you would lose data quite easily. All it took was to go back one page, and you lost everything you did before.

It has changed somewhat, but it still comes down to preparing a lot beforehand. For people who have done it, as Sean was mentioning, you have it set up beforehand to make your application easier. I think that would be difficult for a novice person who is applying for the first time or who has applied only a few times. It would be a bit of a challenge in that regard.

A little bit of advice might be to have more of a pre-application checklist or maybe a list of the questions beforehand, so you can prepare for them beforehand. It would certainly make the process easier, especially for the people who are new to that process.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you.

The next question that I have has to do with reaching out to the government, the contact you might have. Have you reached out to them before with questions? What's the response time like?

For example, a lot of government departments have service standards. When the officials were here, we were questioning them about their service standards, and they were really unclear about what those service standards might be, although they said they had service standards without saying what they were.

Have you reached out? What is the timeline like for hearing back? Has that made it more difficult? Has it been really long lengths of time that it takes for them to get back to you? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Again, we'll go to Habitat for Humanity first.

• (1825)

Mr. Sean Ferris: I'll be direct, and I apologize.

When the program started, it was poor. It went to worse, and now it is extremely better. We are getting great response rates. We're getting timely responses, meaningful and productive responses, and less spin, so we're quite happy with the service we're getting today.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: That's great. Thank you.

We'll go over to Karma Country Camp.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: I also agree. My service was wonderful. The response time was good.

Clarification of who has which grant.... They come in with numbers, not names, so it's hard to manage six different numbers.

In the end, I hire all of my staff as disabled, so I get the MERC back. I always have trouble with it, and even though I work with a bookkeeper and we do a payroll, there's always some discrepancy, so maybe even do the MERC and the funds differently so that I know, again, number-wise, where all the funds are allocated.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you.

I'll go to Mr. Pederson.

Mr. Gord Pederson: My experience recently has been really good. We have, as the others have mentioned, timely responses.

Questions have been answered to our satisfaction, and there are no complaints from this end.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Great. Thank you very much.

I only have about 20 seconds, so maybe I'll just ask Ms. Akerman this. Part of the process with the scoring criteria is that 10 points are given for local priorities that the local MP would submit out of 100 points, so it's roughly 10%. There's a higher percentage that's for the priorities of the government.

Do you think it would be more beneficial to have the local priorities of the local MP be higher? What are your thoughts on that?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: I think it should be eighty-twenty. Your local MP knows what needs to be done in every community. If I'm taking those funds and I'm helping families whose kids are not going to school and are not employed, where are they going? They're going to be using your funds in your community. Let's get them out of the house. Let's get them in schools, in programs, in apprenticeship. Let's get them working because there are people who need employees, and we need to do that.

Definitely. Federal only has.... We need the provincial. They know what's going on. The municipal side, they know what's going on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

Mr. Collins, you have six minutes.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I first want to thank all the witnesses for your appearances today and the testimony that you're providing to get us to the 100% mark in unanimity in terms of those who are satisfied with the program.

Mr. Ferris, I'll start with you. It has been a very tremendously successful program, as 96% of participants who are employers who have participated are satisfied with the program. That number is a bit lower for volunteers, for the youth participants. They're just under the 90% mark.

Your testimony here today helps us in improving the program and in tweaking some of the recommendations that have been made, so I'll start with you, Mr. Ferris.

You mentioned the living wage. I think you're one of the first witnesses to mention a living wage. Can you advise the committee what that means in terms of what's paid through the program right now and the support you get through Canada summer jobs, and what the difference would be if we were to support a higher premium as it relates to a living wage?

Mr. Sean Ferris: Thank you, MP Collins, for putting me on the spot to do math in front of everyone.

I believe the minimum wage is \$15.50. There may have been a recent change and I apologize. Our living wage is \$19.05 currently, so we're looking at a \$3.55 difference times four-plus individuals. I would say that, for construction, kids coming out of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program have the opportunity to go into trades, which is fantastic. To be competitive with some of those trades, we need to go higher than the living wage, but I'll leave it to you to do the math. The number is \$3.55 per hour per student.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thank you, Sean.

Then you mentioned the extra cost that some students need to incur as it relates to the protective equipment that's required. When I volunteered with your organization, I had to bring my own workboots to the site. Lisa and I have been several times. There is a cost there. I'm assuming there might be more depending on the job site. In terms of those costs, do you have any idea what kinds of costs a student might incur above and beyond other jobs that might be offered through other Canada summer job employers?

• (1830)

Mr. Sean Ferris: The PPE included hard hats, eye protection, ear protection, masks of various kinds, gloves and boots. Those are the key ones. Sometimes it's knee pads and things of that nature. We will provide that, but it comes at an opportunity cost because we would be taking those items away from another student or volunteer. As a result, we often incur that cost if the student can't afford it. If the students are not paying for it, we are paying for it. Boots alone are well over \$100. It could easily be \$200, so we're talking maybe \$250 per individual, depending on role and the activity they're engaged in.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Sean.

Sean, you would know, in participating for the last eight years, that there is an EDI component to the application process. We've had a couple of witnesses come forward to say that, just from a geographic perspective, it's been a challenge in terms of meeting some of those requirements and trying to get a diverse field of students through their program. We also heard from StatsCan that 50% of students are unemployed through the summer months, and of that 50%, racialized students make up the largest part.

Can you share with the committee the importance of diversity within your organization, how you accommodate that through the Canada summer jobs program and if you've had any challenges regarding the same?

Mr. Sean Ferris: I don't think I need to emphasize how important diversity is. We absolutely want to bring in a diversity of perspectives, so it's not just about visual differences but about our ability to bring in people who are going to make us better because they see things in a different way. We advertise through local community job boards. We use Indeed. We post internally.

I've reached out to various organizations that support diverse communities to try to bring in diverse individuals, but looking at the five individuals we had on board this year, the diversity was low. That was an opportunity. We are eager for guidance and support in terms of how to enhance diversity. It is not our expertise. I am the HR department, and I am open and welcoming to any guidance and support we can get in that regard, because it is vitally im-

portant but I don't necessarily have the means to leverage that opportunity to its fullest.

Mr. Chad Collins: We've had a couple of witnesses recommend that we include international students. Is that something that Habitat would support in terms of broadening the pool of applicants and those who might be able to boost the diversity numbers that we're looking for?

Mr. Sean Ferris: It's funny you should say that, Chad, because this year we actually brought in a student from France, and it worked out incredibly. He was in it to learn about construction but also to enhance his English skills. He was a tremendous diverse addition to the team and brought tons of skills and other elements that really enhanced us.

One, funding would be important, but two, he's a bit of a unicorn, in that we don't get many international applicants. Knowledge in terms of how to recruit would be key in order to make that a reality.

The Chair: Mr. Collins, you are over your time.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Madame Chabot, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses for their testimony.

In fact, we'd love to talk to you about the housing issue, Mr. Ferris. It's another issue of great concern to our committee.

Mr. Pederson, first of all I think you've been reassured during the meeting. It was not the intention of this committee, through its study, to see the Canada Summer Jobs program diminished. On the contrary, the purpose of the current motion is to see how this program can be improved, both in terms of funding and flexibility. In this sense, all the witnesses to this study are contributing to helping us improve the program. This is the desired objective.

If I understood correctly, you talked about eight-week summer camps, offered to 460 children aged 6 to 12. Considering the specific nature of your summer camps, which are aimed particularly at families in need or single mothers, are you obliged, because of funding and the number of weeks, to offer fewer camps than you would have liked?

You said there were children on the waiting list. Are there still many who can't find a place at a camp, or are you managing to fill your needs?

• (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Pederson: Thank you for your question.

We definitely are not able to meet the needs of our community. We definitely have to turn people away because we do not have the capacity to provide any more programs than we do currently with the number of staff we have.

Our Canada summer jobs funding provides all of the instruction for that program, so without the program we have nothing. It is crucial for us to be able to run the program to receive the funding through this program and, of course, with the funding itself, it allows us to provide low-cost programming. The low-cost programming, especially in our community, is very important and is something, as I've mentioned, that just through popularity alone will show you the effects and how important it really is.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: You also said you had results for eight weeks. I think the majority of witnesses talked about the number of weeks.

Given that you hire young people to take care of young people, would you need more than eight weeks? Some witnesses told us that you often have to train the young people you hire for camps for at least a few weeks. Would it then be more advantageous for you if the duration were longer?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Pederson: Most definitely there is certainly the capacity there to go a little longer. Our situation is a bit unique in that we're based out of a school, so we don't really have access to the facility too much earlier.

We did receive some cutbacks to our program this year. We were able to maintain the eight-week-long program for the children, but where we had to cut back was in training. It was disturbing that we had to make that happen. That way we were able to keep the capacity for the program itself, but unfortunately did not provide the same level of training that we have done in the past.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

Mr. Ferris, I want to make sure my notes are accurate. You said that Canada Summer Jobs salary contributions help you hire four young people a year during the summer months. You also said that your organization works, of course, in different ridings, but that, under the program, contributions are granted for a single riding.

Can you submit requests to create jobs in other ridings? Is it you who's asking to hire four young people a year, or are your needs greater, given that your organization works in several ridings? I hope my question is clear.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Ferris: I think you're very clear. Currently we have only one social enterprise ReStore location, and of course it sits in one riding. We're working on opening another, and we were desirous of bringing students in to support the fit-up of the second building. We weren't 100% sure that we would be able to bring students in, due to safety and permitting and all the other requirements, so we've decided not to apply for Canada summer jobs funding for that second location for fear that we would not be able to employ them there.

If we thought we might be able to switch them between locations, we could even have doubled the amount for one location and then moved them to the other location.

In regard to our construction, we may have times when we can employ students on a specific build site, but then we bring in a professional to do specific work, which prevents students from being there for a period of days and weeks. We need another location where we can send students for safety reasons and other reasons. We can do so, but it lands in another riding.

From a construction standpoint especially, we rarely bring in students, because we need to shift them from location to location and riding to riding. Unless we can absolutely guarantee that we have a span of work for them, we do not apply.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Ms. Zarrillo, you have six minutes.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you very much.

I'll go to Ms. Akerman second, because I want to hear some of her thoughts around hiring employees with disabilities and also how we would connect them to those 92 organizations you spoke about. You have so much knowledge and such a strong network.

I'm going to start with Mr. Pederson, because I just want to express how much I appreciate the work you do in the community. I know you've gone through many challenges. You used to have a physical space, and some changes in the municipality forced your organization to resettle in a different space. You've done a tremendous job.

I think your comments on the importance of these Canada summer jobs to social impacts within the community are so important. My question is around your mentioning that you have a really strong, diverse group of candidates as well as students who come into the camp.

Do you have any suggestions for the summer jobs grant program on how they could incentivize the hiring of youth from other equity-seeking groups? How do we make that more accessible to these groups, or do you have any thoughts on that for the hiring process or even the advertising process?

Mr. Gord Pederson: Thank you so much for that question.

You know, we're fortunate that we have strong representation in our staff population, which has grown organically just by virtue of the nature of the multicultural community we're in. How to make that work on a federal level, I'm not sure. I know that, at the community level, we have a number of community associations that deal with all aspects of the multicultural society and we're able to go through them to make use of their contacts to reach out to people. I'm not sure about it at the provincial and national level, but certainly I think the more we reach out to have students apply for jobs and the more opportunities we have to touch different sectors, the better it is.

Certainly recruitment is not an easy thing. I think most people have probably mentioned how you have to work quite hard to get applications, and we want to make sure we're representative of all those sectors. We may have to involve the provincial and national bodies for some of these areas to provide an avenue to reach out for job applications.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you for that. I don't have a lot of time, so I'm sorry if it seems I'm cutting you short, Mr. Pederson.

I'm going to go to Ms. Akerman.

You mentioned disability. This is an under-represented group in this program—they are below the index in relation to the general population of this program—so I'm very interested in how we increase that. You did mention the 92 organizations you have as touch points.

How do we give more education to these students and young people you're employing about how to tap into those networks? Is that something Canada summer jobs grants can do, in your opinion?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: Canada summer jobs can go with the school boards and work with their co-op programs and go into the high schools. That would be really good because that's where those high school students are going. It's the same with the university boards. There are different points also. You have all the government agencies for neurodiversity and all those for autism. If you have an identification, you usually have a support somewhere. If there were a training summer job—for example, one level lower than the \$4,200 you give per person, so we would give about \$2,000—so that we can start training people out of high school and mentor them a little bit more...because we can't pay them the same amount, that minimum wage. If there's a training program that leads them into summer employment.... All the government agencies have different mandates on how to train people with disabilities for jobs, but when you get there, there's not enough training with the employer to keep the sustainability.

I'm neurodiverse. I was a teacher and it was a horrible job for me. I had to follow a lot of rules all the time and I was terrible at it. I am so grateful I did not get fired, but I also couldn't live there and stay there because there were too many rules for me. Those are the kinds of things our neurodiverse youth face when they are leaving high school. Where do they go? How do they know how to work anywhere? For people with disabilities, there is a piece missing in this transition. They can stay in high school until they're 21, but you hold their hands there. They are supported continually, and parents are involved. When kids turn 18, they are adults. You can't do anything for them. You can't talk to them. I have parents call me, but I can't talk to the parents, even though I should, because the kids are neurodiverse and can't make their own decisions. There's a piece missing in there, and that's the piece we need to address if we want to use disabilities.

There is also ODSP. I work with ODSP. There's funding of \$3,600 per person with ODSP, but it's the same thing. I get that for six weeks. I can't afford in either of my businesses to continue employing people I have to continually train. It takes up too much time. We need a piece in there. We need a better training piece.

There's a lot of money here and there are a lot of kids here. There's a missing piece.

• (1845)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

We're going to conclude with two-minute rounds, because I need a few minutes for committee business. We'll give a full round of two minutes each, so it's basically one question.

We'll start with Mrs. Falk for two minutes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you to each of our witnesses.

Ms. Akerman, you've done a great job, so please don't doubt your ability.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: Imposter syndrome gone—thank you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Preach.

I'm going to direct my questions to you, if that's okay.

Do you find, in your experience, that the Canada summer jobs program's application and eligibility criteria are clear and easy to understand?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: No.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Are the program applications and the Service Canada website written in plain language?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: For your brain, maybe.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: No. I'm asking for you.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: In plain language...?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Is it simple and easy to understand?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: It's not for me—no.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: It's not for you. Okay.

In your experience, do you find that applying is easier for organizations that have experienced staff on hand who have grant writing experience? Is it easier for them to apply?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: Sure. It's definitely easier if you're an organization and have more staff.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: How many—

Ms. Shawna Akerman: It took me 65 hours in total to work on the grant and all of the pieces—all of the payroll and all of the application. It took 65 hours.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: What are some tangible things that this committee can suggest to make it easier for people like you, who are maybe the only person doing the work, to apply for this program so that you can continue to do the work you're doing?

Ms. Shawna Akerman: I would love to have a support person who walks me through it and stays in touch with me to make sure that I hit all the markers. I would love it if the information came in chart form, in some different way—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That's easy to read.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: —because I have to keep going into the system, into “manage”, into this, into that.... I try to cut and paste all the numbers so that I can follow them. I can show you my system of organization.

The answer is yes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you.

The Chair: That's a very efficient use of your time, Mrs. Falk.

We'll go to Ms. Hepfner for two minutes.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I would also like to thank all the witnesses for their testimony here today.

We've heard really great testimony throughout this study about how important and valuable the Canada summer jobs program is, and we've also heard about things employers would like, such as more flexibility. Of course, everyone wants more money for their program, and that's understandable.

I'd like to address a point made by my colleague MP Ferreri. It might not be StatsCan's job to collect statistics about this program, but the department that administers it certainly collects data about how well it is working. For example, 89% of youth who participated developed and/or strengthened their employment skills, 97% developed transferable skills, 89% developed a positive attitude about their future employment prospects, 97% of employers would reapply for the program and 96% of employers were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the program.

We've also heard about this number of 10% for local priorities, which I don't think is accurate either—

• (1850)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: —and there's 15% for national priorities.

The Chair: Clearly state your point of order.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

If she's referring to me, can we have tabled with the committee what she's referring to, what those stats are and what she's using?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That would be great. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Absolutely. I think it will be really helpful.

I was going to say that, when we're talking about this 10% number, I don't think it's accurate. Hopefully this committee will be enlightened when the department comes back with those details.

Mr. Ferris, it's so good to see you again. Thank you for your testimony today.

So that you're aware, Habitat for Humanity can apply in different ridings in different municipalities. You're not restricted to just one riding. My question for you is this: Does your—

The Chair: Ms. Hepfner—

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Am I out of time already? I was interrupted.

The Chair: You are over time. Those are good stats, though. Thank you.

We now go to Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for two minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since this will be our last session with witnesses, I'd like to thank them once again for their contribution to this study.

I'd like to reiterate the fact that the Canada Summer Jobs program is very important. We can see how improving the program will ultimately reinforce its objectives.

Ms. Akerman, I congratulate you on the work you do and the mission you've given yourself.

If I understand correctly, you offer summer camps. How do you manage to organize them well, given the deadlines imposed by the program? These are announced either too late or too early to properly plan your camps, which also give respite to the families of these children.

[*English*]

Ms. Shawna Akerman: They do.

In February, I put up all the job descriptions. I do Zooms, because I usually hire about 100 people hoping to see how many grants in how many municipalities. I have about 100 staff on hold. I feel terrible doing that, but I tell them they might have the job or they might not. The minute I have all my contracts and everything ready, with everyone's emails—all hundreds—in the system, I'm offering the job as soon as I get my grant.

Whenever you say yes to me.... They come in differently, by the way. For nine of them, I only got five responses. For the other two, I didn't even get a no. They just sat there in the government account saying "pending". They could have come in at any time. I got one really late from Barrie, and that was for 20 people. If you don't use it, you don't get it again, so you know I used it.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

We'll now go to Ms. Zarrillo for two minutes to conclude.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you.

These two minutes are really quick, so I'm going to focus on training. I'm going to ask Mr. Pederson and then Ms. Akerman.

I'm hopeful that we will get a recommendation out of this report to expand the eight weeks to at least accommodate the reality of the need for training.

Mr. Pederson, I would ask if you could recommend how much time you believe is needed for training to give the Canada summer jobs grant employees you hire the best chance of success in their summer jobs.

Mr. Gord Pederson: Thank you for your question.

I believe at least one full week dedicated to training is needed, if not a little bit more. We provide a lot of stuff in that, such as first aid and other kinds of programs that we partner up with other communities for. We need, certainly, at least a minimum of a week to make that happen.

• (1855)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Is that a cost to you to have the first aid?

Mr. Gord Pederson: Yes, it is.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Can you share how much per...?

Mr. Gord Pederson: It worked out to about \$70 to \$80 per person.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much.

Ms. Akerman.

Ms. Shawna Akerman: I do the same training. My staff also does the vulnerable sector check at a cost to them, which is probably \$20. There was another cost. I can't remember it now, but CPR....

I would like at least 12 weeks for most of my staff. Because we're talking about teens with disabilities who don't want to leave their houses, we do a lot of nurturing. Everyone I hire, almost in February, does volunteer work for me throughout the year, if they can, in some way or the other, to prove they want to be part of my community and to have that job. That's how I do my training.

I only run a six-week program so that I could do a week of training and a week of follow-up at the end to see what everyone learned and what they liked. I do a lot of feedback and surveys in person, because no one does it online. Twelve weeks would be great.

I'd also like two positions—I know Mr. Pederson would too—of 20 weeks for a director who can run it, so I don't have to anymore. I'd like to pass it on, but it's hard to do that if you don't have the positions to pass on to.

Twenty weeks, 12 weeks and a couple of eights, and we're good.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Akerman, you had the last word from the witnesses.

With that, I will advise the witnesses that they can leave.

Committee members, we have a few minutes for committee business, but I'm not going in camera.

I need direction first. I'm going to get permission from the committee to put out the press release advising when we will be starting the AI study, if that's agreeable. As well, there is a press release that the financialization study will be tabled in the House and a press release covering Mr. Aitchison's motion that will be tabled in the House. We have three press releases going out.

Is that good?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: On Monday, we have Romy Bowers and Kelly Gillis appearing, so I believe you may want a little time to give drafting instructions to the analysts, unless you're comfortable with doing it now.

We can go over by no more than six minutes.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Are you talking about the Canada summer jobs...?

The Chair: Yes. I would like to carve off some time on Monday's meeting for drafting instructions.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: No, not at that meeting.

The Chair: Okay. Then we have to do it now.

We need to give drafting instructions to the analysts on the Canada summer jobs. We've concluded. This is the last meeting with witnesses.

Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you. I guess it's fairly quick.

On drafting instructions, I certainly heard a lot about the social impact. I would sure like to see some of the importance of social impact in the report, because perhaps the mandate of Canada summer jobs can have a dual mandate, or it can have that addition.

Also, I'm always interested in the gender perspective and the gender aspect. I think we had some amazing testimony today on disability. Perhaps why it under-indexes for disability.... Certainly, Mr. Jones and Mr. Emmanuel also talked about equity-seeking groups and the Black community. I think we should definitely have a portion on those under-represented groups and how we could make that better.

Then, lastly, I have been pushing.... I hope there's some testimony that talks about the other aspects of Canada summer jobs—not just the money they gain or the work. Can there be other ways to lead them into the labour force, like around how to file taxes? If they have entitlements, they need to know about it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

I have Madame Chabot, Mr. Van Bynen and, I believe, Mrs Gray.

Go ahead, Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Perhaps I see this report as too simple.

Our study was spread over four meetings, three of them with witnesses, and the mandate was clear. The witnesses were quite generous for the most part. They gave us recommendations or food for thought, both on the modalities of the program and its financing.

The various avenues they suggested could be very relevant and we could use them in our report. I haven't seen any briefs, or at least I haven't seen any in my P9 account. I don't know if we've received many. I'm getting the nod that there have been some.

As for the main recommendations, we asked specific questions, to which we got answers.

Our task can be a simple one. I don't think it will be a voluminous report, unlike others.

Thank you.

• (1900)

The Chair: And for—

Ms. Louise Chabot: How many briefs did we receive?

Ms. Eleni Kachulis (Analyst): We only received one, but the due date is today. We may receive more.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

I have Mr. Van Bynen and then Mrs Gray. Then Mr. Coteau wants the floor.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we heard a lot of dialogue on the administration and—I'm only using my words—how it was micromanaged, as well as on more flexibility in the administration of the program in terms of how resources are utilized within the program by the employers.

I think there's a need to have good clarification on how the scoring is done, because it's important people make sure the elements of

their program are the best fit. If there are minor adjustments in their programs that would make them more eligible.... Some of the witnesses had some room, in terms of who they focus on, who they hire and what their training programs are going to be. If they knew all those things well enough in advance, I think that would make a big difference in the effectiveness of the applications.

Those are the two concerns: Let the applicants understand what we're looking for, so they can work towards achieving that, and then give them some flexibility as to how they manage the resources they get.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

Go ahead, Mrs Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I trust the analysts to go through the testimony.

A couple of things that stood out, which I think were consistent with a lot of the witnesses, were the timing of the notification, the overall process of the application, the accessibility—which we heard about from a number of witnesses—service standards, local priorities and data collection.

That's all testimony you heard.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri wants the floor.

Mrs Gray, are you finished?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Yes. Thanks.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I would echo what my colleague Mrs Gray said.

I'm not sure whether this was added to this, but one witness.... Do we have to say this, if you guys already heard the witness testimony? I have never done this process before in a committee, where you say what you....

Okay. The one witness from Douro-Dummer talked about how the application was not reflective of the demographic and the rural component. I think that's a key piece when we're looking at this. You can't punish a region of Canada for not being diverse enough, if they don't have the diversity there.

Then, to Mrs Gray's point, data, obviously, is a big piece of it, along with the timing of notification, accessibility, service standards like follow-up, and local priorities, obviously.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you. That's good.

Analysts, do you have anything?

Go ahead, Eleni.

Ms. Eleni Kachulis: I just had two additional follow-up questions.

One of those is a smaller one: Is the committee interested in continuing with the approach of having those pull-quotes, as with the financialization report?

The second question is around whether there is a specific deadline for this one. I know that the committee's calendar is scheduled until the end of December. Is there a particular time when the committee would like to consider this one?

The Chair: I have Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I don't wish to see any highlighted report quotes.

I did ask a question, but perhaps it wasn't addressed to you. The sooner the better, certainly. That report will arrive. On the other hand, we've all received the program in our constituencies. I don't know if, along the way, there might be some improvements.

Speeding things up, in the case of this report, so that it can be sent to the government as soon as possible could prove useful in terms of present or future recommendations. I say that without prejudice. As far as improvements are concerned, this is linked to your work, Mr. Chairman. I think that, unlike with other reports, we could find the time to study this one fairly quickly.

• (1905)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mrs. Gray is next.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was just going to say, to be cutting into other time to be having committee business.... We already have a full calendar. As we just heard, we know that we've already gotten from the department...to do our priorities for next year, so it's already done. You wouldn't think that there are going to be any changes for this year, so I wouldn't want to bump something else to have a committee business day taken away from other legislation and other things we need to be doing.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

We cannot alter the calendar without the committee choosing to do it.

I have two final points on the AI study. It has been recommended that the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development would be better able to address the issues than the Minister of Labour, whom we invited. Does the committee want to stick with the Minister of Labour on AI or invite the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development?

Mr. Michael Coteau: I think it should be both.

The Chair: That's a great idea—decision made.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Tracy Gray: One for a couple of hours and another one for a couple of hours...?

The Chair: We'll invite them. We don't tell who comes—

An hon. member: One hour each.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Maybe even suggest the Minister of Innovation...?

The Chair: On one final point, Mr. Coteau, you want to brief the committee on the option of submitting a travel attached to your study.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Yes.

There are apparently a lot of witnesses we've invited, which is great. Thank you to everyone who has submitted names. I know that we submitted a bunch of names. In addition to that, I think going out there and seeing AI in action is something that we should be doing.

We filled out the form, and we asked for the consideration of the following destinations: Boston, Seattle, Toronto and Montreal. I'd also like to add San Francisco as an option, because of Silicon Valley. I know it's hard during the regular parliamentary cycle, but I'd like us to consider it for maybe some time in January, with one day in Toronto and one day in Montreal, either-or, and then maybe two days in Boston and two days in either Seattle or San Francisco. That would be my recommendation to the committee. If it's possible that we can fit that in, I think it would benefit our study overall.

The Chair: Committee members, I need direction. The way this works is that, if the committee gives the approval to at least consider it, then the staff will work on preparing a budget based on those cities. It will come back to the committee. The committee will then choose if they want to approve it. It then goes to the Liaison Committee for further approval.

At this stage, Mr. Coteau simply wants approval for the committee staff to prepare a draft budget for travel for this committee, which has to then meet all the guidelines. A committee will travel only when the House is not on sitting days. They will prepare a budget based on the locations Mr. Coteau identified.

Are we okay with having this prepared in the last few days before we meet the deadline?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I'd like to have some time to consider that before making a decision today.

The Chair: Okay. At the latest, then, I would like to make a decision by Monday. Monday is the latest to consider it and—

• (1910)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I don't want to bog down the staff's time doing that if—

The Chair: That's fine, Mrs. Gray. We have it on the floor.

On Monday we will have to make a decision as a committee.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Through you, Mr. Chair, can we make sure that San Francisco is added to that?

The Chair: Yes, we'll prepare a little item on it and send it out.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, on Monday, we have a full meeting. We can't really go later. I don't want to cut into committee business time at Monday's meeting. Perhaps at one of the AI meetings we have, we could discuss it then.

The Chair: It's just that the timeline is running out. You can make a quick decision on Monday. It will take all of three minutes to say yes or no, in my opinion.

The analyst will send out to the committee where Mr. Coteau wants to travel—the locations.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: It will be one minute at the end of the meeting.

The Chair: We'll have a couple of minutes at the end of the meeting. It's the committee's choice. The committee has to support it or turn it down.

Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Can you explain the process, if you don't mind, so that we're all clear?

How does it work? You make a recommendation today and the committee votes on it. Is that correct, or is there consensus?

The Chair: The staff will prepare a general budgetary item that will come back to the committee. This committee must vote to refer it to the Liaison Committee.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, if I may, I would like to see in writing what the proposal is.

Do you mind putting something together that can be circulated to the committee members? We just had a quick verbal conversation here. I'd like to see what you said verbally in writing, and then we can look at it.

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's that simple: Can we go to Seattle, San Francisco, Montreal, Toronto and Boston?

The Chair: The committee can go wherever it chooses, provided that the Liaison Committee—

Mr. Michael Coteau: Then we vote on it.

We're not actually going. The clerk is going to work with their team to prepare the proposal.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Fair enough. Could we get that in writing—what it is, where the places are, what it all is?

The Chair: I'm about to lose translation.

Mr. Michael Coteau: We'll do that for Monday.

The Chair: We'll submit it to all of the committee members.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I'd like to move a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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