

TRANSCRIPTION

HEADLINE: Round Table on Creating a More Efficient Labour Market in Canada
Hosted by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards: First Session -
Improving the Effectiveness of Sector Councils

PRINCIPAL: Mike Carr, Co-chair, Training and Adjustment Committee of the
Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress;

Moderator: So without any further ado I guess I'd like to get this roundtable rolling and that means to turning to our first session which is on improving the effectiveness of sector councils and I think we all know Canada's experience in sector councils is in many ways -- we're a world leader in that area and other countries are looking at us and it's a new institutional development that has I think a lot of possibilities and we want to -- we've asked four people to -- or five people actually to give a very quick overview of their perceptions and observations in this issue. So we're going to have a joint presentation by Mike Carr and Doug McPherson and they are the co-chairs of the Training and Adjustment Committee of the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress which is one of the leading pioneering councils. I might add that I will not introduce the speakers in terms of their background. All that information is available in terms of their bios in the documents that were handed out yesterday. So without further ado I'd like to turn it over to -- I'm not sure if it's going to be Mike or Doug who's going to speak first.

Mike Carr: Actually myself. Thank you very much. It's certainly a pleasure for Doug and I to be here this morning to speak to this very important issue. We feel strongly that this discussion is not only timely but it's fundamental to moving the efforts of the CSTEAC forward as well. Between us, Doug and I have over 50 years of experience with workplace training and industrial adjustment and over 20 years of practical experience dealing with labour market issues on a sectoral basis. Over those 20 years we've strongly come to believe that sectoral councils have been a positive and uniquely Canadian innovation, that have significantly improved the efficiencies of labour markets in the Canadian scene.

If you take a moment after the conference and browse the CSTEAC web site at www.cstec.ca or look at the About CSTEAC information that George will provide you here today, you'll find that we have over 15 years of very significant innovation and cost-effective development of solutions to meet critical challenges in the steel industry. In particular the areas we've focussed on have been adjustments for workers who lose their jobs due to downsizing, training of the current workforce in order to ensure skill enhancement, and recruitment and pre-employment training of new entrants to the industry. In this we are not alone. Other industries have used their sectoral councils to address their needs in innovative cost-effective ways as well, always using similar strategies. Those strategies have significantly improved the employability of both the employed workforce and of laid off workers. They've contributed to youth employment and the attraction and retention of youth to industry. They've improved the quality of education and training available to employers and their employees and they've reduced the costs by reducing duplication and getting economies of scale in the development

and delivery of education and training programs. Finally, they've improved access to education and training across the country. These strategies have benefited the industry and its workers. However, in many cases they have also had very important social and public policy benefits.

In a nutshell, we believe that there are two key factors to the success of sectoral councils to date and these factors will be of great importance to their continued success in the future. The first factor is the ability of sectors to identify common goals or challenges and to come together to discuss and develop methods for meeting those challenges in an effective way. In CSTECH we've learned that even though a goal may be common, we need also to identify the different needs of the participants. Indeed the WIIFM, what's in it for me, tends to be the most important motivating factor for the parties involved. What we've found is that once we've identified those that we can then pool resources and expertise of all of the parties to produce highly innovative, cost-effective, successful results for each of the parties.

The second key factor in CSTECH's and other councils' success to date has been our ability to access generally available government programs in a sectoral way which enable us to have the industry work collectively on the development and delivery of needed services, to develop innovative partnerships with education and training **providers**, to ensure that the product developed and delivered is of the highest quality, and to develop partnerships with other industries as the products we've developed have an identified need across the economy.

If we are to improve the effectiveness of sectoral councils in the future, we believe that we have to work **at** developing these two critical areas. That means that there are important things that industry and education and training providers need to be doing but there are also actions that governments need to take on an urgent basis. As you will hear from Doug, action on the part of governments is especially urgent because we believe that in the last three years national sectoral approaches have been put at significant risk as a result of two changes.

The first change is a shift in labour market and training policy decision-making and funding from the federal to the provincial and territorial level. And the second is the shift, related or not, away from a more flexible policy framework that used to accommodate sectoral, community and individual program access to an almost exclusive reliance on individual client based programming. These changes have made it more difficult and more costly for councils like CSTECH, first to access generally available programs on a sectoral basis, and secondly to develop and implement nationally recognized and delivered sectoral strategies. On this note, Doug will now briefly outline some recommendations we would offer for discussion here today which we believe will make an important contribution to determining the future of sectoral councils in Canada.