

**CSLS Roundtable on Creating a More Efficient Labour Market in Canada
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Participants' Discussion

Session 4 Improving the Effectiveness of the Apprenticeship System

Moderator: Okay, thank you very much Shirley. I think the presentations really underline the fact that we really can't talk about a national apprenticeship system in Canada. We have - it's under provincial jurisdiction and the state of apprenticeship varies greatly by province. I think we've seen the contrast between Alberta where the system appears to be working quite well and Ontario where there appear to be more problems.

I just want to give some clarification on the numbers that Shirley referred to. Those numbers were put together by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards and they reflect Statistics Canada's database on apprenticeship which they receive their data from the provincial apprenticeship directors. So it's administrative data and the completion rate it's not a cohort analysis tracking people over time. It's just the ratio of the total number of people registered in an apprenticeship program compared to the percentage that graduate every year. And that's why we compare that with other forms of post-secondary education such as community colleges and universities. And for example if an apprenticeship program were three years and everyone completed in three years you'd expect based on this methodology a completion rate of 33% and that's what you have approximately in the community colleges and universities. But in the apprenticeship program it's much, much lower. It's around 10% nationally and certain provinces I'm sure it's much higher like in Alberta but one could argue still, when you look at the number of people completing apprenticeships every year I think the number is around 18,000 or so, they're in your binder, and then compared to the number of people that are registered in apprenticeship, which is around 180,000 or so, there's very few that actually complete every year in terms of the official numbers. Now maybe there's something wrong with those numbers and if there is we should be looking at the numbers that Statistics Canada releases on that issue.

Okay, enough said by me. Let's get on to some discussions. Who would like to start the discussion? Yes?

Denis Goulet (Coordonnateur du Comité Interfédéral du Sector Privé, Confédération des syndicats nationaux):

La CSN qui regroupe au Québec environ 225,000 membres. Je voudrais parler pas nécessairement des systèmes d'apprentissage mais plus de la formation continue. S'il y a un certain lien à mon avis qui peut être fait là par rapport à la formation continue.

Vous savez probablement qu'en '95 il y a eu l'adoption au Québec de la loi sur le développement de la main d'oeuvre, la formation du développement de la main d'oeuvre qui obligeait les employeurs avec un certain plancher, de 100,000 dollars de masse salariale et plus je crois bien, qui obligeait les employeurs à investir 1% de cette masse salariale - de la masse salariale dans la formation.

Nous avons à la CSN fait une enquête auprès de nos syndicats pour savoir quels étaient les résultats, qu'est-ce que ça avait changé dans la vie de nos membres de nos syndicats, cette loi-là, qu'on appelle du 1%. Et nos syndicats nous ont dit que généralement - bien sûr là c'est pas toujours égal, il y a des exceptions, mais généralement dans l'application de la formation du développement de la main d'oeuvre dans les entreprises, les employeurs plus souvent qu'autrement agissent seuls, non pas avec les syndicats et non plus pas avec les employés. Ce sont les employeurs qui déterminent les programmes, qui déterminent leurs besoins et qui vont de l'avant avec pour investir dans la formation.

On a aussi découvert que pour les officiers des syndicats qui ont répondu aux enquêtes que chez 30% des syndicats, des entreprises, la majorité des membres des syndicats avaient des réticences à la formation, avaient des craintes par rapport à la formation continue, par rapport à la formation professionnelle dans les entreprises. Alors ça nous a pas mal ébranlé et on a décidé suite à ça de faire un colloque sur la formation continue de deux jours à l'automne dernier.

Dans ce colloque-là on avait invité monsieur Paul Bélanger qui est un professeur de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, qui est en train de faire une chaire, de créer une chaire sur la formation continue et monsieur Bélanger nous parlait justement des chiffres de l'OCDE qui monsieur Georgetti nous a parlé tantôt qui disaient que la position du Canada généralement dans la formation continue n'est pas très luisante par rapport aux autres pays de l'OCDE et particulièrement également la position du Québec par rapport à l'ensemble des provinces, où on n'a pas une position très reluisante.

Et monsieur Bélanger faisait ressortir dans sa conférence que d'après lui un des problèmes de - mettons pour solutionner ce déficit-là de la formation continue était de favoriser l'expression des besoins chez la population travaillante et c'était ça le problème. C'est à dire qu'on faisait - dans les entreprises on pouvait faire des programmes de formation mais ces programmes-là répondaient davantage aux besoins propres des employeurs sans tenir compte nécessairement des aspirations des travailleurs ou des besoins des travailleurs et auxquels cas plus souvent qu'autrement il n'y avait pas de relation qui pouvait se faire et on manquait notre coup.

Alors donc suite à ça on a, mettons arrivé sur les conclusions du colloque pour tenter de tout mettre en oeuvre à la CSN pour faire en sorte que ces besoins-là des travailleurs puissent s'exprimer et on pense qu'en favorisant l'émergence de comité de paritat, de partenariat entre les employeurs et les syndicats, où on

pourrait mettre en oeuvre des conditions plus propices pour que ces besoins-là s'expriment. Donc en même temps les besoins des employeurs qui existent et en même temps si on peut coller à ça les besoins des travailleurs pour faire augmenter en même temps l'employabilité des travailleurs et en même temps la productivité on pense qu'on pourrait arriver à faire émerger une meilleure culture de formation continue dans les entreprises au Québec.

Deuxième point, pas tout à fait au niveau de l'apprentissage mais qui est fort préoccupant pour nous au Québec, qu'on en a parlé hier et je crois bien aussi aujourd'hui mais surtout hier au niveau du vieillissement de la population, du vieillissement de la main d'oeuvre travaillante là. Ça nous inquiète beaucoup parce que d'ici les prochaines années, et je crois que c'est la même chose ailleurs dans tout le Canada que d'ici les prochaines années près de la moitié des travailleurs, des travailleuses vont partir à la retraite et ça va créer un déficit, à notre avis là au moment où on est, un déficit au niveau de la main d'oeuvre. Et donc on essaie de travailler actuellement à établir avec nos fédérations syndicales et nos syndicats, développer des politiques de gestion, on appelle des politiques de gestion prévisionnelle de la main d'oeuvre qui pourrait être discutée avec les employeurs. C'est à dire essayer de voir aujourd'hui, faire le portrait des entreprises pour voir comment se présente l'avenir, comment ça va se passer, qui s'en va, comment je vais faire pour les remplacer et surtout comment je vais faire parce que c'est pas tout de remplacer par des gens, des jeunes qui proviennent des milieux d'éducation mais comment je vais faire pour que la culture de l'entreprise se passe d'une personne à l'autre, d'un travailleur à l'autre.

Alors on va essayer de jouer avec différentes - je termine là-dessus, avec différentes notions comme des retraites progressives qui existent au Québec. Il y a des modifications à la loi sur le régime des rentes qui permet des conditions allégeantes aux gens soit de partir plus tôt à la retraite ou soit de partir plus tard avec des meilleures conditions, soit en jouant avec une réduction du temps de travail qui pourrait faire que des gens mettons au lieu de partir maintenant pourraient rester au travail à demi temps mettons et ainsi pouvoir faire communiquer leur savoir aux autres qui arrivent et bon puis évidemment il y a des notions de réorganisation du travail qui sont sous-jacentes à ça pour faire en sorte que la passation du savoir puisse se faire correctement.

Moderator: Merci pour votre intervention. Other interventions? Yes, Paul.

Paul Swinwood:

I'm here representing the educational systems of Canada. In my personal view, and it's the reason I was particularly interested in this session, increasing the effectiveness of the apprenticeship system is probably the most interesting means, the most interesting strategy available to us now to increase the viability

of our labour market strategies. But I'm a little bit disconcerted by some of the figures that I've heard. They're very compelling arguments and issues but I've heard that there's variability in completion rates which I knew already was the case no matter how they're computed, that there is a lack of industry support generally in many of the provinces and there's a failure of the educational systems I think to create the kinds of public perceptions amongst both students and parents that would be necessary.

But my question of the speakers is this, given the tremendous difference in performance among the provinces in Canada and the devolution, and we've seen the stellar performance of Alberta but I would regard that as exceptional in Canada at the moment, are the best strategies that the speakers could tell us about likely to be provincial only or are there national strategies given the kinds of compelling issues, Mr. Georgetti, for example, that you mentioned that you would see would be possible in Canada.

Moderator: A very relevant question. Jim.

Jim Lahey:

In a sense I'm repeating what Paul said but add a couple of things. First, I want to ask three questions. First one is on the premise that Alberta's setting a very high standard of performance in this area which a lot of evidence was presented to support that view, why is that? Why are you special other than that you're - I mean I'm teasing but what forces or circumstances came together to bring you where you are? The second thing is if it's the case, and I believe it probably is, that in many industries from the auto industry, the construction industry, other industries, you know, we're five to not very many more years away from sort of half the people disappearing, why aren't the employers screaming? Why aren't they - or are they so, you know, sort of shortsighted that they're sort of imagining that, you know, magically the people will appear? Or maybe they are screaming but not loudly. And thirdly, and this is where I'm picking up from Paul, it's clear that apprenticeship is in the provincial domain, they run the systems and so on and there's a lot of resistance on the one hand to federal, what can I say, meddling, tinkering, interference, whatever, that's as opposed to federal leadership of course, but on the other hand there is sort of a market in some quarters for, you know, feds should get, you know, get on their horses and ride over the crest like the cavalry and somehow or other save the day although some places don't need to be saved. But to be less facetious, can the speakers be more precise about what role you think the federal government ought to play in assisting or encouraging or complementing, whatever, employers and the provinces in dealing with this crisis.

Moderator: Shirley, would you like to respond to the Alberta success?

Shirley Dul:

First I'd like to say that I work a lot with my colleagues across Canada and I'm not sure the picture is quite as bleak as it's been painted in other provinces as well. Alberta has always enjoyed strong industry support, I think because the legislation gives industry the control. The act itself says that the industry through the board, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, and through the groups that they have advise them which is the provincial apprenticeship committees, will set the standards for training and certification. We have a well managed system by industry. They have level exams. They tell the institutions what it is that they would like to have in the training and then at the end of each training program, each period or block of training then the industry is able to determine whether the apprentices know that or not by the level exams. And I know that when one group of people move their apprentices from one place to another place and are now trained in Alberta, that was some of the things that they said, it was the industry control and the level exams that made a big difference to them. And I think as well that the provincial government has always been a strong supporter of industry and so when the federal government withdrew from funding apprenticeship, it didn't cause a crisis in Alberta because Alberta had always funded it themselves and so I think that that wasn't as big an issue. That's one point.

I just wanted to respond to your other two parts though and what role should the federal government play? There are some areas there, and I brought up one and that was the tax for tools. There's many industries that have come forward to the federal government and discussed tools, most recently, as in the last year, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association from across Canada, that's one. Another that, I know that the employer group and probably the Canadian Construction Association would raise is EI support and when the two week training allowance was discontinued that did have an impact across Canada on apprentices being able to attend technical training. EI support, a recent survey done in Alberta says that although there's a two-week waiting period and apprentices should be able to get their cheques a week or so after that, that in fact it's five and six and seven and eight weeks before apprentices actually get their cheques and that's really affecting across Canada the ability of apprentices to take technical training.

Moderator: Thank you very much. Ken, did you want to --

Ken Georgetti:

I think you - not to speak for Alberta but the fact that Alberta's enjoying a very strong economy right now might be one of the reasons why you have so many apprentices as well. I can remember when tradesmen used to come from Alberta to British Columbia when the forest industry was booming too. Let's face it, apprentices are based on the strength of the economy and really, we only train when there's a need to train and we don't train in a proactive sense. In the university system we do and in the college system we do but in the

apprenticeship system we train usually when there's a crisis and then all of a sudden immigration becomes the issue and the rest of it and by the time we finish training them the cycle's over and we're laying them off. And the reason why I think apprenticeship rates, the rate of graduation is so low is it's based on the economy of the industry. If they're laying off you're not graduating apprentices because you don't just lose your training, you lose your job too.

I think the federal government can play a very strong role in a couple of ways and you mentioned one is with the EI funding and training. But I think the federal government still has to maintain a set of standards because portability in apprenticeship and your certification is very important. I have that red seal and that means my skills to any employer across the country knows that I have the basic skill sets and I do get worried, I must say, when industry alone sets the standards for apprenticeship training because they'll set the standards just for their industry and train very tightly that you'll become as almost happened in British Columbia a forest industry millwright rather than general millwright because they train you for just the skills that they need for the industry itself.

But I think the federal government can play a strong role both in terms of standards but they can play that role and have the influence because they have the funding and I agree that the EI funding system should be modified to allow for a draw from that fund for the purpose of training, for the purpose of training to a set of standards and goals that the Canadian government would set across the country. I think it would be a heck of a fine incentive, better than some RRSP type training tax scheme. It's there. I would frankly like to see that money used. It's paid in equal portions. I'd rather see that money used to help train the idle workforce than to give capital gains exemptions frankly.

Moderator: Yes, go ahead, Richard.

Richard Johnston:

When I hear of the problems there besides - I mean Ontario has a very special relationship with the federal government around training of course and I'll let Bruce speak to that but besides that, I mean there is growth in apprenticeship in Ontario because the economy has been good. I mean the stats are in the binder, they look not bad. But they don't touch what's coming is my point. And the planning for what's coming doesn't seem to be being taken on with the urgency that is required and I concur with the kinds of things that the government could be doing federally. I also think that options around distributed learning for distance learning options is a very expensive thing. We do it at our college and we lose a packet on it because it costs us so much to produce the content in that kind of a medium. Help in that way would be very useful for making things more flexible so if people are moving around the country before they complete various aspects of their education they could also be able to do it at a distance and it

would be something where I think the provinces would be probably quite anxious -- (tape change).

Unidentified Male Speaker:

(In progress) address some of the issues about what's going on in Ontario. We are in the middle of a major overhaul of our apprenticeship system, have brought in new legislation, the first legislative changes since in about 35, 36 years. I would say we are working our way through the policy and some of the policy issues. We still have a number of administrative and funding challenges ahead of us and Richard certainly spoke quite directly on some of those. It's not feasible to talk about a sustainable system if the major providers of training in that system are losing money in it, certainly a point that he has shared with us in more private sessions. He's usually a little more direct on the point. And then we have public commitments to double the size of the system, looking at new registrants as the prime sort of measure of doubling the system, recognize that there are serious issues about completions and it is a very difficult and complicated problem. Clearly the economy is a major determinant in terms of how people and when people finish the system.

I think Shirley was making some points in that the numbers are kind of difficult to get a handle on whether people who are laid off do end up finishing but maybe over a little bit longer than they otherwise might have taken and I think the nature of the employment aspect of the training system is a complicating factor and certainly we've seen in Windsor in the last little bit as a result of layoffs at Chrysler a major issue in terms of apprentices, as set out in the collective agreements, who are losing their positions as a result of those layoffs. We have sat down with the college and with HRDC to try to work out some strategies so that the training that has been invested in those people was not lost as a result of the layoffs and I think making some progress on that front but across the board I mean given again the role of employment in the training process, we need to do a better job in devising and implementing strategies to retain apprentices. Increased modularization - thank you, can't do it if you can't say it - is a key piece so that we can measure an apprentice's progress through the system and capture that process. We need to do more in terms of monitoring and counselling, both with the employers and the apprentices as they're moving through the system. That kind of monitoring that will remind and encourage employers to send their apprentices off for the in-school training. I mean that has to happen in order for the progress to take place so again we're not losing the progress that people make.

We need to find ways of I guess strategies to deal with laid off apprentices. We had a number during the last downturn where we used local apprenticeship committees to sort of form a virtual employer so that a number of firms in a community could take some ownership for the apprentice during a period of

layoff and keep the system working that way and I think there are - it's a big challenge and I think there are a number of ways we need to move that forward.

The attitudes, I mean everybody's talked about it, it is a huge issue I think and drives a lot of decisions, parents, kids, counsellors and probably, you know, drives or makes decisions within government a little more difficult as well. I mean that is part of the cell that we need to work our way through in terms of government. We have introduced the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and are continuing to expand that program which allows high school students a way to start to prepare for entering into apprenticeship and there has been a pretty good take-up on that. It is still a fairly small piece of the overall puzzle but it is something that I think we need to grow and the capacity of the school system to support it, not just in terms of their infrastructure but their - I mean to have people in place who can make the arrangements I think is a bit of an issue as well.

Employers, I mean employers, Jim, you know, I think are aware of the numbers and they do know who is expecting to retire. They may be screaming. They're not all necessarily screaming with their pocketbooks and making the investments necessary to pull through. In terms of apprenticeship part of the challenge on our side is to make sure that the system is more flexible, we have more ways of making it attractive to employers, that's a key piece.

Apprenticeship training didn't devolve as part of LMDA. Apprenticeship training has been a provincial responsibility for some time. Those mechanisms to provide for mobility, including red seal, are primarily arrangements across provinces to coordinate standards, the federal government is a supporter of the initiative, that it is a way of coordinating provincial standards rather than setting national standards.

One additional piece in terms of - you know, a small piece that might be helpful from the federal government would be to take a look at rules that make training benefits provided under EI taxable benefits and certainly that is a disincentive for training and a bit of a harsh treatment for people who have paid into the system.

And I think finally looking at distance learning is a big piece. It's part of the overall flexibility. The way the system works now, if apprentices go off on what's called block release, where they're gone for a big chunk of time for their in-school training that's generally paid for through the EI system. That's currently about half of the number of apprentices in Ontario are paid through, or maybe a little bit less than half. We are pushing that number down because we know employers and apprentices don't necessarily just want to go off for block periods of training that day release and other ways of acquiring your in-school training works better and even though we pick up the tab for that side of it, it is a piece that we encourage and promote. The thing around distance learning, a final point is we need to figure out a new way of funding distance learning because the process is

very different. I think as Richard said the cost is not all up front but mostly up front. I mean you have big sort of investments in putting the curriculum and develop - applying the curriculum to the new technologies maybe a little bit less in ongoing administrative and lecturing costs and I think we need to think about how the funding for that kind of learning takes place. Thanks.

Unidentified Female Speaker:

Thank you. I have a question for Richard Johnston. You mentioned that pre-apprenticeship training was a major area of unmet need. Clearly it's something that not one organization on its own can address. You talked about the problems with respect to both funding and economies of scale for example for your college to be able to work on that problem. And I think today we've been talking about a number of new structures or new infrastructure to be able to address needs in the changing labour market and I'm wondering what kind of new structure might be required to address that particular need because it seems to me you're really looking at something that probably doesn't exist right now and may require the involvement of many different players and supported in many different ways that we haven't thought about yet.

Richard Johnston:

I think it is hard to do from an institutional base. The situation is probably different in different parts of the country and for different groups. The strategy probably for trying to get more aboriginal people into the trades it would be different than what we would be facing in Toronto although the deficit of academic capacity would be similar to some of the issues you're running into in terms of immigrant populations for language reasons. In Toronto I would think it would be good if organizations like COSTI and other immigrant settlement kind of groups were working with colleges, unions and employers to come up with some means of dealing with this but we would need some kind of a funding recognition for it. There just isn't any at this stage. It's a problem with - the soapbox I get on a lot is the next challenges for my level of post-secondary are not the high skills areas. We can add post-diploma programs to attract university graduates to colleges without any trouble at all, get huge donations for government. Our problem is that in the next 15 years or so about 25% more of the population is going to need to have post-secondary education of some kind and I include apprenticeship in that. And that bridge, for that group to make it successfully into post-secondary is going to be much tougher than the bridge we had with the move from 15% during the mid-'60s to the 40% approximately we have now. So that challenge no one's dealing with I don't think effectively in public policy terms and it fits in this area. How do you actually develop those kinds of groups to come together to provide those resources? But maybe because it can't be done by existing institutions alone it does allow the federal government to get involved without it being seen to be intruding which is always the big issue as you look at

these things. So if there can be some kind of enabling process to help us get ourselves together as groups to problem solve this, it would be very helpful.

Unidentified Female Speaker: That's quite what I had in mind. Thank you.

Moderator: Okay, Bert has a question.

Bert Pereboom:

I wanted to ask about the validity of - I guess of looking at completion rate as sort of an indicator of the health of the apprenticeship system. If I look at, you know, the percentages there, it actually looks like the percentage of completions rises during recessions and falls during peaks. And I'm wondering if that doesn't indicate that people are acquiring skills they need through apprenticeship programs but not finishing the actual requirements for the apprenticeship. So and that suggests to me that maybe the system is quite healthy in conveying the skills that people need to do these jobs but it's not particularly healthy in sort of getting people to stay on for that certificate. Now I have some sympathy because I'm somebody who never finished that Ph.D. But still I'm working as an economist. And don't people who take these apprenticeship programs still work say as a bricklayer or you know, a millwright or a carpenter or whatever. They're still using their skills on the job but haven't necessarily achieved that certificate. So, and then the question is, you know, is the level of skill required by business meeting the need or meeting the standard that's required for the certification?

Moderator: Does anyone want to comment on that? Is the apprenticeship training still useful if one doesn't complete the program? One still acquires many skills during the apprenticeship. Anyone want to - Richard?

Richard Johnston:

I'll give it a shot. I think you do see that phenomenon and you see it with college programs. In good times people leave, don't get their diploma and their job and move on. But my guess is it's an issue of data again and we really do need to look at what kind of research basis we're working from here. My sense is that people actually leave the job and that part of apprenticeship during the bad time but they're not locked off the lists at that point. But then they find work in some other field and in the good time they just stay in that area. I mean that's anecdotal, that's not statistical, but I think that that phenomenon is as large as the other is my instinct. But I think we need that kind of information to know. When we look at success in the college, if a student doesn't get their diploma but they're employed by that firm, we consider that a success. Now our key performance indicators that the government asks for don't but that's another matter. We know they'll come back and complete it at some point or other to get their ticket, in that term, but they are successful. But I've got a feeling that the data would probably bear out that a lot of it is lost to jobs.

Moderator: Any other comments on that issue? Bruce?

Bruce Baldwin:

My understanding too is in non-compulsory trades where you don't need the certificate in order to practice that's a much more common phenomenon and that there is a - you know, a relatively successful outcome and I don't know how we quantify that but where people will go through a couple of years and either move on or continue to work at that level without continuing through the formal - throughout the formal process. So I think there is more leakage for the non-compulsory trades.

Unidentified Male Speaker:

I think the question of Bert in a way for me is relatively simple. Through my experience talking with people in the workplace, when workers learn something they use it. Maybe they don't have a completion, maybe they don't have a certificate but they use it. I don't know numbers, I cannot measure, but for me it's kind of even a non-question. If somebody takes two years of apprenticeship, whatever they learn they will use it.

But the point I want to make is sharing with you a story about attitude and the federal government possibilities to intervene in the issue of apprenticeship and attitude. And this is about training centres, union training centres in B.C., in Vancouver. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2000 has a training centre in New Westminster that is supported partially by employer contribution and partially by HRDC EI and they have a program that is called Discovery to Apprenticeship. And what they do there is they have an agreement with the training centre of the construction trades, and like in many other provinces the construction trades have training centres, a joint training centre run by the employers and the unions and what they have is a group of young people, unemployed young people. They used to have large numbers for six months. Now with the reduction of EI they have small numbers for three months. But what they have is the UFCW training centre provide a two-week or a four-week classroom training on three years of learning, labour market, and a return to learn and after that the young people will go for two weeks at a time to different training centres of union training centres. They will go two weeks for the carpenter schools, then they will go two weeks to the painters schools and they will go two weeks to the plumbers schools and during this two weeks they have kind of a very short version of what the apprenticeship program will be. And during that time they learn what the job is and if they like it or they don't like it. They learn what they need to learn. And they learn how much money they will be making. And let me tell you when you learn how much money some of these unionized construction jobs pay your attitude change relatively quickly. Then this system in which they run sometimes 30 people at a time, sometimes 15 people at a time,

never have more than one or two participants that do not enroll after in one of the training schools. Everybody and 95% of the participants goes back to one of the schools that they tried in which they discovered a job that they feel attracted to, that they pay okay, that they like it. Then there is just an example you have kind of a way to deal with attitudes and a way in which the federal government could help to young people and I'm sure that if you do it with young people you can do it with people middle age or whatever. But this is a way of dealing with inviting people to go back to work in the trades.

The second point I want to make is the issue of distance learning for apprenticeship and I want - I think it has to be very careful with that because an apprenticeship is something that's very important in the mentoring, the sharing, the learning through other people and you do that in the workplace when you are learning with somebody else but you also do that when you are in the classroom because you are sharing with other apprentices that are going to another workplace and are doing something else. You are learning with whoever is teaching you to have experience in the trade. Then there is this aspect of social learning that a computer cannot replace. And it's true, it's very efficient and when you have it set up at the beginning it's quite expensive but when you have it set up it's great, anybody, anytime, any moment can go to the computer and do whatever. But there is the social relation in the apprenticeship especially and I think it is the same with distance learning and many other aspects of the location of knowledge but in the apprenticeship in particular mentorship and social interaction is the essential part of the learning. I will say distance learning for apprenticeship I would be very careful how we approach it.

Moderator: Thank you very much. André, you had a comment.

André Piché:

Just two brief comments and they relate to Jim's questions. His last question was about the role the federal government could play and one that was mentioned by Shirley before was the tax on tools. There is a private member's bill right now in front of parliament on this subject and we will support it and we'll be strongly behind it.

The second point is about the role that the federal government could play perhaps in promoting an informed debate on what needs to be done in the area of apprenticeship and that's based in my view with respect to what we can expect in terms of the Canadian population getting older and we all know it's coming and I think we need to have more understanding of what it means. And I think that would be very useful to all of us because we can then have more of a dialogue with the provinces and try to perhaps get some things done.

Moderator: Okay. Thank you. Are there any more comments or questions? Are we running out of steam on this issue? Okay. Well we're almost - okay, that's great. Well again we're about three minutes before 5:30.