



ISSN 1180-4327

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 13 May 2009

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 13 mai 2009

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

2008 Annual Report,
Auditor General:
Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Rapport annuel 2008,
Vérificateur général :
Ministère de la Formation et des
Collèges et Universités

Chair: Norman W. Sterling
Clerk: Katch Koch

Président : Norman W. Sterling
Greffier : Katch Koch

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Wednesday 13 May 2009

Mercredi 13 mai 2009

The committee met at 1230 in committee room 1, following a closed session.

2008 ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL MINISTRY OF TRAINING, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Consideration of section 3.08, employment and training division.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Good afternoon. My name is Norman Sterling. I'm the Chair of the public accounts committee, whose task is to take sections from the auditor's report—today we're dealing with section 3.08, employment and training division of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities—and to put forward suggestions and recommendations so that the efficiency and effectiveness of our public service can improve and meet some of the observations noted by the Auditor General.

We have with us today Deborah Newman, who, as I understand it, is the relatively new deputy minister of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and she has some other people with her. Deputy Minister Newman, I would ask you if you have some opening remarks, and perhaps you would be kind enough to introduce those who are sitting with you at the table.

Ms. Deborah Newman: As the Chair indicated, my name is Deborah Newman, and I am the new deputy at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you today and to answer your questions.

I am joined by Marie-Lison Fougère, to my right, assistant deputy minister for the strategic policy and programs division; Kevin French, to my left, former assistant deputy minister for the employment and training division—Kevin has agreed to make a guest appearance with me here today. He has moved on to the Ministry of the Environment but has quite a depth of knowledge in this area—and Patti Redmond, director of the programs branch of the strategic policy and programs division. Other ministry staff are also present to provide more detailed responses, if helpful. Together we'll do our best to answer your questions today.

I do have some opening remarks.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities plays a critical role in the government's economic agenda

and educational strategy. The Ontario government continues to strengthen the province's economy by investing in the skills and education of our people. We're working to help laid-off workers, newcomers, job seekers, students and workers find the training and jobs that will help them achieve their goals. We work with employers to help them find employees with the skills they need. We provide incentives to encourage employers to hire apprentices. We work with communities to help them develop the skills and learning strategies that will attract jobs and investment.

The ministry's vision is for Ontario to have the most educated and highly skilled workforce in the world in order to build the province's competitive advantage. Our goal is to achieve this vision through best learning and labour market outcomes and highest participation rates and graduation rates in all forms of post-secondary education and training. These goals are ongoing, and that's because in the global marketplace our competitors continue to raise the bar higher. All industrialized countries, including newly industrialized countries, recognize the importance of skills and learning to economic success. So there's a global competition for skills. An economy with a highly skilled and educated workforce has an important competitive advantage.

Ontario has a dynamic economy. Even with the challenge of the global economic and financial storm, we're fortunate to have one of the most highly skilled workforces in the industrialized world. Ontarians didn't achieve that level of skills and learning overnight. It was achieved by government working with partners in the education and training community. It was achieved by the people of Ontario making individual decisions to keep their skills sharp and to recognize the importance of skills and learning to personal and professional success.

That's important because the demand for skills and learning continues to rise. Seventy per cent of tomorrow's jobs will require post-secondary education and training. That means my ministry must work with its partners to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and higher skills training to keep pace with technology and the global marketplace. That means helping learners of all ages. It means recognizing that learners require a wide range of skills, from literacy and foundation skills through sophisticated apprenticeship, technology and professional training. We must continually improve how we do our business, so that the people of Ontario can keep pace and our economy will remain strong.

1240

The financial and economic storm that has engulfed us should not blind us to the longer view. Yes, of course we must help individuals and families in need now, and that is what Ontarians would expect of their government. At the same time, we must look ahead. We must give people the opportunity today to develop skills for tomorrow. We must prepare people for the new economy, so that they can participate and contribute to growth when prosperity returns.

I'm proud to report that the ministry is making that contribution. There are about 100,000 more students studying at colleges and universities in Ontario, an increase of 25% over 2002-03 levels. Since 2004-05 there has been a 27% increase in maximum student assistance levels, while still limiting student debt for qualified students to \$7,000 a year. We're taking action to break down barriers to post-secondary skills and learning for aboriginal students, first-generation students, persons with disabilities and francophones.

Despite the challenge of economic change, we have met our targets for registering apprentices in 2008-09. In fact, registrations are up by 7% over the previous year. We've reached our goal of over 28,000 new apprenticeship registrations. In Ontario, there are 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today, which is nearly 60,000 more; it has doubled since 2002-03.

Registrations in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program increased to 25,000 last year from about 23,000 in 2005-06. We're recruiting more young people to become the skilled workers we will need tomorrow.

The number of people participating in the Ontario skills development program has increased 14% over the previous year, to 13,239. Job Connect continues to serve people who face barriers to finding work, those educated overseas and people participating in Ontario Works.

Of course, the state of the economy and its impact on industry and family has influenced these numbers. We see that directly in the activity of the rapid re-employment and training service. From April 2008 to March 2009 we responded to 289 layoffs. The previous year, we responded to 198 layoffs. By the end of 2008, over 82,000 individuals had been offered help by the rapid re-employment and training service.

So our employees, our training partners and our programs and services are helping people in need. Second Career, for example, has exceeded its service targets in all regions of Ontario. At our most recent count, almost 11,400 people have come forward to participate in Second Career. My ministry, working as a partner with colleges, community-based training and employment groups, unions, school boards and municipalities, to name but a few, is helping Ontarians to weather the economic storm.

Can we do better? That's our goal. The ministry is motivated by the spirit of continuous improvement. The employees of the ministry are experienced and committed to serving the people of Ontario.

Do we want to do better? Of course we do. That's why we've developed a long-term plan to transform Employ-

ment Ontario. Employment Ontario delivers 17 employment and training programs and services. Access to these programs and services is provided by government staff and by third-party partners, including colleges, school boards and community-based, not-for-profit organizations such as the YMCA and Northern Lights, to name just a few.

A number of these services were recently transferred to the ministry from the federal government under the labour market development agreement. The Ontario skills development program is one; the Ontario self-employment benefit is another. Others, such as the apprenticeship training system and literacy and basic skills, were part of the provincial government's traditional mandate. Today the ministry is in the process of integrating staff and redesigning former federal and provincial programs.

Since the transfer of federal programs, our focus has been on providing uninterrupted service to clients: people looking for training and employment, employers and communities. We're looking to transform these services to provide better service to our clients. In fact, given the economic change, the transformation couldn't be more timely.

Our goal to improve services so more Ontarians can get help with career planning, job search and job retention is critical. We're ensuring that Employment Ontario better meets client, community and stakeholder needs. Through these improvements, our customers will be able to access employment services from a single point of service. We're making our services more responsive and flexible to meet the needs of customers and communities. Where service gaps exist in communities, we're working to close them. We intend to build on the strengths of the Employment Ontario network. Implementation will proceed in a planned, staged and phased-in way.

Given this activity and the context of the Employment Ontario transformation, the ministry was pleased when the Auditor General chose to review the operations of the employment and services division. The Auditor General's staff elected to focus on four areas: skills development and self-employment programs, which were transferred from the federal government, apprenticeship, and literacy and basic skills. We welcome the Auditor General's review as a means to help us do better. The report provides helpful recommendations to guide us as we improve the work that is ongoing and the work that we need to do tomorrow. The ministry is developing a framework and targets to guide tomorrow's investments in education and training. This will be a broad strategy that will include post-secondary education, adult literacy and skills training, including apprenticeship.

On apprenticeship, I want to point out that the ministry distributed a media release this morning stating that it will introduce legislation that would, if passed, help us take a key step in promoting skilled trades as attractive careers and modernize the apprenticeship training system. If passed by the Legislature, the new college of trades would provide the government with a forum to raise, discuss and resolve issues with all the participants in the apprenticeship training system.

In general, the Auditor General's report commended the ministry's success in increasing apprenticeship opportunities and registrations. As I indicated previously, the number of registered apprentices has more than doubled in the last number of years. At the same time, the report noted that fewer than half of apprentices complete their training. It also focused on the difference between in-school pass rates and certification success rates. The report raised questions about the enforcement of legislation on restricted trades and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the apprenticeship training tax credit.

We believe that, if accepted by the Legislature, our proposal to create a college of trades will give the ministry the tools to take action in a comprehensive manner, and with the support of participants in the apprenticeship training system, we'll be able to deal with the Auditor General's recommendations on apprenticeship in a comprehensive manner. We can work effectively with our partners in the training system to ensure that it meets the needs of apprentices, skilled workers, employers and the customers and consumers of products and services produced by skilled workers.

The Auditor General's report also directed the ministry to ensure that the apprenticeship training tax credit is effective in helping to expand apprenticeship interest and opportunities and meet labour market needs. It recommended that the ministry should work with the Ministry of Finance to evaluate whether it is achieving the expected outcomes and whether improvements are needed to enhance its effectiveness. I can assure the committee that we are working with the Ministry of Finance to do just that.

1250

Looking at the Ontario skills development program and the Ontario self-employment benefit program, the auditor recommended that steps be taken to ensure consistent delivery and levels of support for customers no matter where they live. This advice is timely. As I mentioned earlier, we're in the process of transforming Employment Ontario to better serve customers, and these recommendations will assist in that transformation.

A key component will be the development and implementation of a performance management framework for the training programs. This framework for training services will clearly set out three broad dimensions of service delivery success: effectiveness, customer service and efficiency. Performance indicators will be developed to clearly track client characteristics, outcomes of training, customer service standards and provincial targets.

In terms of literacy and basic skills, the report asks that further work be undertaken to reduce funding inequities among literacy and basic skills service providers. The Auditor General acknowledged our progress on this file. At the same time, we recognize that more work needs to be done. The ministry is looking to technology to help us and to our partners to develop a performance-based management system.

The 2009 Ontario budget announced \$90 million over two years to expand literacy and basic skills training.

This investment will help us to serve an additional 13,000 Ontarians each year. Last year, nearly \$75 million was invested in the literacy and basic skills program. This investment provides programs at almost 300 sites across the province, including colleges, school boards and community-based organizations. We also provided almost \$2.67 million in one-time funding to literacy and basic skills service providers to help them deal with additional pressures last year.

The literacy and basic skills program, including academic upgrading, assisted nearly 50,000 learners in 2007-08, with 67% of exiting learners going on to further education and employment. The number of learners served and their rates of success has increased steadily since 2003-04. Our goal is to provide customers with high-quality literacy services no matter where they live. As part of our effort to achieve that goal, we're working with our partners to develop a literacy curriculum and a common assessment tool to gauge the effectiveness of literacy programs.

In conclusion, 60 years ago Winston Churchill told an audience at Harvard University that the empires of the future would be empires of the mind. Churchill could have added that along with the mind there would be empires of skills, because skills and education are prime factors in attracting investment and jobs. That places a growing responsibility on my ministry to provide Ontarians with the training and learning that will help them succeed and the economy succeed. Ontario is home to production facilities for global biotech giants, IT and aerospace. Our GDP is among North America's top 10 and is larger than Belgium and Austria. We're home to 19 universities, many with a world-class reputation. Our colleges are among the best in the world. Our skilled workers and apprentices compete with world leaders. We have achieved much and we intend to achieve more.

Today there are laid-off workers who need advice on their next step. There are young people, women and immigrants looking for work or further education and training. There are employers that need skilled workers and want to keep the skills of their employees sharp. There are communities that want to develop strategies to provide the training and education that will attract jobs and growth. Through planning by staff and through consultation with our partners in the education and training communities, we're ready to take the next step.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Thank you.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you very much for your presentation and for coming forward.

Your mention of the new college of trades. Can you just enlighten us? If this were to pass, we realize the political implications, but how do you visualize this being unfolded province-wide?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Thank you for that question. The idea behind the college of trades is really to attract new apprentices to the trades and to give the trades a professional status like teachers or health professionals or

engineers. It will attract more people, raise the profile and status of the trades, help to promote careers in the trades and particularly attract youth and underrepresented groups to the trades. It would also make it easier to attract and certify internationally trained workers, to set training and certification standards, to conduct research, to make sure that training priorities are focusing on the needs for the future of the high-demand trades, and also give the skilled trades sector ownership.

It will be very much an industry-driven, self-regulatory body. It will allow the trades to have ownership and make critical decisions on issues like compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios. It really will protect the public through the self-regulatory aspects, including a public registry of its members, receiving and investigating complaints and reviewing and delivering education and training and so on.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: So how would the reviewing and providing education and training—one of the concerns in the past was, I can recall, for example, the best man at my wedding was a carpenter. He had to drive over an hour every day to go for the actual training part as a carpenter, whereas locally we have Durham College, which would be able to provide that. Is there some component in there that will include all the colleges, to make sure that it's immediately accessible?

Some of the difficulties are: When the boom is on and these individuals are requiring their educational component, it's very difficult to drive those distances, whereas if it can be utilized in the evenings so they could work through the day and do these courses in the evening, it would make it far more accessible and be much more beneficial, both for the economy and the individuals.

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm going to ask Patti Redmond to respond to that.

Ms. Patti Redmond: Okay, and I think it's important to establish that the college of trades, as it is proposed, would be a regulatory college, so it would be like the college of physicians and surgeons, as the deputy noted.

The community colleges and the non-community college training delivery agents, which are largely the union training centres, but there are others as well, would continue to provide the in-school portion of the apprenticeship training experience. So in the example that you provided in terms of the carpenter, they would be certified by the college as being able to work as a carpenter, but they would still continue to receive that training at those facilities.

The ministry will work in partnership with the college of trades to identify where in-school training needs to be provided on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that people have access. That's something that the ministry does now.

Not all apprenticeship in-school programs are offered at every single college across the province. There are over 154 trades within the Ontario apprenticeship system, so it's part of that ongoing process, but we do envision that if the legislation does pass and the college of trades is created, they would be able to work in partnership with

the ministry in terms of what that strategy would be, and that once a person becomes certified as a journeyperson in a particular trade, the college would continue to provide ongoing training to those individuals.

1300

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I think one of the things that was indicated was that the ministry was undertaking work with organizations to reduce the extent of un-certified—oh, wrong one. Sorry. That's the next question.

The initial responses would be “completing regional apprenticeship registration and completion strategies” to deal with this issue. I was hoping that the educational component would be included, to make sure there's regional accessibility for all the trades that are requiring upgrades.

One of the other aspects is that by the time individuals enter into a college environment, a lot of the decision-making process as to what field they'll be influenced to follow has already been set.

Locally, I know that in the Durham board there is a very successful program that may close this year—the Durham district public board—because their carpentry students and electrical students have no facility to work on. So the program may effectively close because they have no support there.

Are there some joint programs that will initiate apprenticeships at a lower level to ensure that by the time they get to the college level, they have already made that decision on their path, and the decision-making process has been determined?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I think I'll ask Kevin if he could comment on that.

Mr. Kevin French: Thanks for the question. Kevin French, assistant deputy minister.

In response to the question, the system itself and the demand for particular trades is something on which we work very closely with our training delivery agents—I'm just building on my colleague's comment—whether that be delivered through a public college or through a union training centre or, in the case to which I think you may be referring, through school boards if it's an OYAP program, an Ontario youth apprenticeship program.

Are there cases where there are pressures or not enough demand? Yes, and what we've been doing is working with the local communities to make sure that we are addressing those. The case that you've brought up is one that I can assure you the local Employment Ontario training office will follow up on.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The concern is to get people actively involved. I can recall that, going through school, we regularly took shop, as it was called, in many different aspects. But my kids, going through those same grades now, don't see any of that aspect in school at all, which appears to be not an inspiration for them to get involved in those activities. I think that the younger they are when we get youth involved, the more likely it is that the apprenticeship programs will move forward and be

more successful, because people are determined to follow through on it.

You mentioned about the other point I was bringing up, which was the initiatives undertaken to work with organizations “to reduce the extent of uncertified individuals working illegally in restricted trades.” How do they determine—for example, an automotive mechanic and the drive-through oil changes. So, for example, they’re not certified oil mechanics, but they are certainly doing mechanics-related work. Would that effectively put these individuals out of employment, or is there going to be a new department for that? Or is that removed from the aspect of dealing with automotive mechanics?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Okay, sorry. Let me try to make sure I understand the question. Are you speaking in the context of the college of trades, in terms of how that would work?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, the concern is that the comment was made that there were initiatives undertaken by the ministry to reduce the extent of uncertified individuals. Where do we determine who is certified and who is not certified to deal with certain aspects of performance of a function? The case I was referring to was about automotive mechanics. You now can do the drive-through lube places, where by no stretch of the imagination are these individuals certified mechanics, yet they’re performing mechanics-related activities. How would that particular incident—it’s just a for-instance—be applicable?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Within the Ontario apprenticeship system, as the deputy noted in her remarks, there are what we call compulsory or restricted trades. There are 21 of them, in fact, in the province of Ontario, including automotive service technicians. I can’t speak specifically to the oil change issue, but an automotive service technician, in order for them to be able to perform work, must be certified to be able to do that work. That would continue as part of the college of trades. The college would work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Transportation and other ministries that have a role in the enforcement and health and safety of job sites to ensure that anybody performing work or a part of work that is a compulsory or restricted trade is certified to do that.

I’m not sure if that’s answering your question specifically. The college itself would—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: So they’ll determine the boundaries by which the operation—it could be the same, for example, in an appliance repair shop where individuals are doing rewiring of appliances, like at Oshawa Appliance, which they’ve been doing for 50 years, but where they are not electricians; the same sort of incident.

Ms. Patti Redmond: The current number of compulsory trades would be those trades unless the college decided that additional trades would be added. There is a mechanism that is outlined in the proposed bill by which new trades could be added to the list of compulsory trades, to the 21 that I spoke about earlier, and people who work in those trades must be certified to work in

them. That is different than the example we talked about earlier, which is a carpenter, which right now is a voluntary trade in Ontario. So you can work as a carpenter in Ontario without holding certification, but, as I said, the proposed bill for the college of trades does outline a process by which new trades could be considered as compulsory.

Ms. Deborah Newman: Just to add briefly to Patti’s remarks, about half of the trades, those participating in the trades apprenticeships, are in the compulsory or restricted trades, so the 21 trades that Patti mentioned. Those have currently been defined as requiring certification.

You mentioned uncertified individuals and our efforts to reduce the extent to which they are working illegally in restricted trades. As I think we’ve noted in our status report, we’re working more closely with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Transportation. The Ministry of Labour, of course, has the mandate to inspect worksites in the compulsory or restricted trades, with the exception of hairdressers, which the ministry inspects, but in all other restricted or compulsory trades, and we’ve now made provisions for the Ministry of Labour inspector to be able to directly access the ministry’s data to support their enforcement activities. So if they are attending a worksite in a restricted trade and a worker isn’t able to produce their certificate, then the inspector can look them up to find out if they are in fact registered or otherwise would be illegally working. We’re working with transportation to establish the same kind of access to our data to facilitate compliance and enforcement activity.

The college of trades would have this mandate to consider any other areas or functions, such as the couple of examples that you’ve provided, to determine whether they ought to be regulated as restricted or compulsory trades as well.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I’m going to ask a supplementary because I’m very much interested in this. I just was reading a report of the ministry from 1973, Training for Ontario’s Future, which recognizes the problem for mechanics in the automotive sector that, even at that time, almost 50 years ago, in the large cities in particular, they were starting to specialize in terms of what mechanics did. Mechanics worked on transmissions or carburetors or various different parts. Because 90% of the training was on the job, how could these people possibly write an exam on the other parts of the car—breaking down an engine, doing that kind of thing. The recommendation in the report is that the ministry then provide the programs to provide that training, so it wasn’t a 90-10 split but some other kind of a split.

1310

So you’re telling us that nothing has changed in the last 50 years, with regard to the plight of a particular individual who’s working on one aspect of a mechanical repair, to pass the exam. But he still needs the certification in order to be able to work, let’s say, on transmissions alone. He still has to have the certificate, right?

Ms. Deborah Newman: That's correct.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): What is the ministry doing to assist the individual to write the exam on the parts that he's not getting on-the-job training for?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I could probably give a pretty high-level response to that, but I think I'm going to ask Patti to give a little more detail.

Ms. Patti Redmond: I'm not entirely familiar with the report you're referencing. I'm trying to think where I was in 1973.

If I understand it correctly, the question that you're asking is: There are a number of trades within the automotive service area. So, for example, there's alignment and brake technician, autobody collision and damage repair, autobody repair, automotive glass technician, automotive electronic accessory technician, automotive service technician. I'm not sure—we could certainly provide to you when these various trades were introduced. But one of the efforts that we've made over the last number of years within the apprenticeship system is to recognize the fact that in some industries the work can be specialized. In other words, you can have specialists who may work only in a particular area. We have introduced those types of trades, and developed both the on-the-job and in-school training standards, curriculum and exams associated with those specific occupations, in order to recognize that individuals would work in those specific areas and would need to ensure that they have the training that is appropriate to that particular area. That is true within the automotive service area and in other areas as well.

The ministry works very closely with industry when it develops the training standards and curricula, in order to ensure that those standards reflect the needs of the industry now, and recognizing that those needs do change as new technologies are introduced, in order to ensure that people who are taking that training meet the requirements of today's workplace.

So there has been that effort in terms of recognizing that there are some specialized trades within certain sectors, and then there are other trades that have remained—that do acknowledge the fact that in certain circumstances, individuals may be involved in a number of those activities.

I'm not sure if that directly answers your question, but—

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Another recommendation in the report was that there be advisory committees in each regulated trade, made up equally of employers and employees. Do those advisory committees now function?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Yes, they do. They are referred to as provincial advisory committees and industry committees. They exist for trades or groups of related trades. They are the committees that ministry staff work with to develop the training standards and curriculum that I referred to earlier. That is where we get a significant amount of input about what is involved in terms of the trades.

The college of trades, if the bill is passed, would be responsible for the development of those training standards and curricula and would be working with, obviously, representatives from industry in terms of the development of those.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I have a great deal of interest in this report. I was given this report about a year ago, when my uncle, who wrote it, died. His name was J. Douglas Swerdfager. He worked for the ministry at that time and was renowned in terms of his knowledge about apprenticeship programs. He basically was the guru for the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of all of their training and technical programs. So I'm interested in it, and I'm interested in the fact that a lot of things haven't changed much since the problems that were identified in that report. Here we are, 50 years later. The apprenticeship ratios are the same as they were 50 years ago. Things don't seem to have moved along very much.

The other part too is—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's because it works.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Someone said that you'd just recently been elected.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Well, this was 1973. I was elected four years later.

The other concern I have is the use of numbers. There were the same games played at that point in time in terms of numbers: They talked about registrants; they didn't talk about outcomes.

Can you give us outcomes on the success of the apprenticeship programs? How many people registered and how many came to certification?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'll start on that and then turn it over to staff.

The auditor certainly spoke to the importance of completions. I think we've indicated that we've more than doubled the number of apprentices who are working toward becoming certified, to 120,000 from 60,000 in 2002-03. I think the issue of completions is critical. In terms of turning our attention to better tracking and monitoring, what we do know is that there are some complexities in tracking this. But overall, about 50% of those are actually completing and becoming certified. The stat here: From 2002-03 to 2008-09, the ministry issued 80,000 certificates. That's a fairly significant number of completions and new certificates of qualification.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Can you give us those numbers in the 21 regulated trades, please?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm advised that the completions are higher in the 21 regulated trades and professions but we don't have the specific number. I guess it's intuitive that there would be higher completions in the restricted trades, which comprise about 50% of those working in the trades, because you must be certified to work in the trades. I'm not sure that we actually have that number, other than to know that it's higher than the average of 50%. I think we can get that number for you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Thank you.
Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Mr. Ouellette, can we come back to you?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My time is up?

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): I think the Liberals had indicated that they want to—

Interjections.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think he thinks he's in line.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Most of the time, we don't let the Chair speak. This is how fair this committee is, that we allow the Chair to ask questions.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): You're going to get extra time, Mr. Marchese.

1320

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Madam Deputy, I just want to make an observation. I have questioned a number of deputy ministers and ministers in my time. I think I've been here too long, because every time we've questioned deputies and ministers, they're new. The last time I was asking questions of Mr. Colle, he was new and the deputy was new. Then we asked questions of Mr. Milloy, and he was new, and I believe the deputy was new, if I recall.

Ms. Marie-Lison Fougère: Acting.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Acting." You see what I mean? There's a pattern here. I don't know how we're going to fix that, but I wanted to mention it as an observation.

Ms. Deborah Newman: We don't all age in place.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You mentioned that we are—I think you used the words "world leaders"—as it relates to apprenticeship programs. Is that correct? Can I ask you, Deputy: What is it that the world would want to take from us that is highly regarded by them and/or by us?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I think that Ontario is recognized internationally as having a highly skilled workforce and that when we look at our workforce, it is a competitive advantage. When we look at the demands in the economy and the indications that 70% of the workforce in the future will need to have some kind of post-secondary education credentials—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand the idea that post-secondary education is critical and is needed. That I get. But I just wondered in what areas we're world leaders and what others would want to covet from us, because I just don't see it. If there is something, I'd like to know what it is about our training that people are saying, "Good God, Ontario's the leader and we need to go and see what they're doing."

Ms. Deborah Newman: I don't know if others have specific breakdowns, but I know that the Canadian Council on Learning has assessed Ontario as having among the most highly skilled workforces in the industrial world, so we actually are recognized for the skills of our people here in Ontario. This is more anecdotal, but I know in

speaking with colleagues that there are businesses and companies that are looking to Ontario to invest in because of those skills. In particular, digital media was one example that was used. I don't know if others have any more specific—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, no, please. I have so many questions. I think I've got a good sense of what you were saying.

I just don't know where to start. I'm going to go to the college of trades because you gave a lot more detail, and one thing was promoting careers in the trades. Can I ask you: What is it that the college of trades will actually do by way of promotion? Is it built into whatever the new bill says that they will do such-and-such, or is it by their mere existence that they will be promoting the trades? Is that it?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I think, to begin with, having a regulatory body, an industry-driven body—its mere existence does signal the importance of attracting people to the skilled trades and raising the profile and status of the trades. I think that, in itself, is—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But there's nothing that is written in the bill that simply says that they will spend such an amount of money to promote the trades—nothing like that, correct?

Ms. Deborah Newman: As far as I know, it's not that specific.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do want to say that simply setting up a college of trades doesn't, in and of itself, promote the trades.

Ms. Deborah Newman: It will raise the status of the trades. It will provide a dedicated focus. They will be conducting research and gathering data on high-demand occupations and actively promoting attraction to the trades. I think that historically some parents or members of society haven't seen the skilled trades as a high-profile as they should be—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand, and I want to make a point about that because I don't believe we do that well. Just having the College of Teachers, for example, doesn't promote teachers. It doesn't. But I do believe we need to promote the trades. I don't think we do a good job of it.

I have to tell you, when I was a school trustee I attacked the basic level schools because they were places where Italian-Canadian kids were sent and Portuguese-Canadian kids were sent and black kids were sent. So I had a sort of visceral problem with how we streamed certain communities to them. There are lots of stories of Italian-Canadians who would say, "Teachers would say that we were good with our hands"—because if you look at our hands, it's a trade kind of hand. That kind of streaming was terrible—not to say that trades are bad, but if you send communities as a whole to them, it's bad.

But I do agree that we should be promoting the trades. I don't believe that the college is going to do it, and I think that the ministry should do something about promoting the trades. So the question is, have you thought about what you could do to say, "Trades are a good thing, and here is how we promote it"?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Again, the intent behind the college of trades is really to raise the profile and status, not for specific groups but generally, as a very viable career path for young people.

We do have a number of measures currently that are used to promote the skilled trades, including the youth apprenticeship program and opportunities for dual credits for high school students, again to promote more young people going into the trades.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand. Okay. I want to move on, because there are so many questions to ask.

Can I ask you: In terms of the college of trades, what's the membership? What's the constitution of the board? Who's there?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm going to ask Patti to speak to the governance of the college of trades.

Ms. Patti Redmond: The college of trades in the proposed bill would have a board of governors that would be comprised of 21 individuals, four from each of the four sectors within the apprenticeship system—that is, the service sector, the industrial sector, the automotive sector and the construction sector—and then there would be five laypersons who would represent the public. So that is the composition of the board of governors.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, I missed—five—

Ms. Patti Redmond: Five laypersons who would represent the public. The college of trades, again, as it is proposed in the bill, would also have divisional boards that would be accountable to the board of governors, and there would be four of those divisional boards representing those four sectors within the apprenticeship system.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And what would these divisional boards do?

Ms. Patti Redmond: They would deal with issues that are specific to the sectors. We recognize that there may be areas that are of unique importance to the construction sector, and they would be, as I said, responsible for dealing with those.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay, thank you, Patti. Are they an independent body of government? Is that the case?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Yes, they are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What responsibilities are they taking from the ministry, if any? You might list all the responsibilities that you now hold in the ministry that they're taking over.

Ms. Patti Redmond: As it was outlined earlier, the college of trades would take over the responsibilities for the certification of journeypersons within the trades system, and that is a function that the ministry currently performs. As I mentioned earlier, we do that work in terms of the development of standards, working with industry, but the college would take over that responsibility.

The bill outlines the specific objects of the college, which are, if I could just go through those quickly—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, Patti. The objectives speak to the kinds of roles that they will be taking from the ministry—is that what you're saying? Because I

understand “objectives”—okay, if it does, then I wouldn't mind hearing about it.

Ms. Patti Redmond: As in the proposed bill, the college would have the following objects:

“1. To establish the scope of practice for trades.

“2. To regulate the practice of trades.

“3. To govern the members of the college.

“4. To develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the college.

“5. To issue certificates of qualification and statements of membership to members of the college and renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke or reinstate those certificates and statements as appropriate.

“6. To promote the practice of trades.

“7. To establish apprenticeship programs and other training programs for trades including training standards, curriculum standards and examinations.

“8. To maintain a public register of its members.

“9. To determine appropriate journey-person-to-apprenticeship ratios for trades subject to ratios.

“10. To determine”—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Patti, that's great. Thanks.

You have 100 training consultants in the 26 fields. Do those consultants go to the board or do they stay with you?

1330

Ms. Patti Redmond: Because the ministry will continue to be involved in what would be referred to as the pre-certification phase; in other words, the registration of apprentices during—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So they don't go; they stay with you.

Ms. Patti Redmond: That's right.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business stated in an article in the Toronto Sun just last year, entitled Changes Needed to Boost Skilled Trades Employment, that the establishment of a new college of trades would be a “diversionary tactic.” She said, “Business owners don't need more bureaucrats to tell them how to do their job. The government needs to do more to get young people and others into the trades so that we won't have any big barriers to the growth of small and medium-sized businesses in the province.”

How would any one of you respond to that criticism?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Well, I certainly wouldn't characterize it that way at all. I don't think it's intended to bureaucratize or present barriers; quite the contrary. In partnership with the ministry, because we will retain some key functions like registration and allocation of funding to training delivery agents and so on, the college is intended—in fact, it is based on recommendations from Kevin Whitaker, as chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board. I think he has made wise recommendations and provides a balanced approach to governance that should very well result in attracting more people to the trades.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The apprenticeship is a work-based training model that combines on-the-job training, which is approximately 90%, with classroom

training, which is approximately 10%. Has the ministry ever assessed that kind of differential? Do you still believe that on-the-job training should be 90%, and is it working? And do you believe that classroom training, which is approximately 10%, is good, and is it working? I build on the question the Chair asked, because that question wasn't really answered; that is, a lot of apprentices fail the test. The question the Chair was asking is, if 90% of the time is spent on the job and 10% in class and they're failing the test, what is it that we could do, or should be doing, to deal with that? Is this ratio still defended by the ministry, and has it ever been reviewed?

Ms. Deborah Newman: What I would like to address is the part of your question that talks about how the ministry is supporting apprentices in achieving a higher pass rate for the certification exam, and then speak to any history of assessing the relative weights of in-school versus on-the-job training.

In terms of the pass rates for certification exams, the ministry's employment and training consultants in this area are assisting apprentices by preparing them to write the exam. They support them with a study guide and counselling on an individual basis; that is, to apprentices. They will assist them in reviewing the results of the exam and discuss with them any areas of weakness or areas in which they may need to improve in order to develop a plan for success, looking at a wide range of options to accommodate them, such as extended time for writing the exam, arranging for a private room if distraction is an issue for them, in some cases arranging for an interpreter or a translator—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that improving the rate of success?

Ms. Deborah Newman: We think these kinds of measures that we're undertaking will improve the rates of success.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have no documentation on that just yet—

Ms. Deborah Newman: That's correct.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—but we will someday.

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes, we will. We will be developing better data going forward, through the creation of a new information system called the Employment Ontario information system. That will allow us to have more robust data and to assess the reasons for—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The \$25 million that is being spent for that new information system: Is that what that is about?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Is that the figure? I would just ask my colleague if that's the correct figure for the system.

Mr. Kevin French: It's ADM Kevin French. There was \$25 million, as you rightly point out, that was part of the labour market development agreement, and that is part of a new information system.

I want to build a bit, if I may, on the deputy's comments about efforts—and I think the Auditor General's report is very balanced. There's clearly room for improvement. There are areas in which staff have under-

taken to improve the pass rates, and the deputy has outlined some of those. We have also undertaken some research with individual apprentices about their reasons for not completing. So there are ongoing areas that we have focused on—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And the research started when?

Mr. Kevin French: It started last year. The report was issued in March 2009, so this spring. It's based on a report that was done with the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Training Board and two of our training delivery agents, which are Sheridan and Humber College.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can you share that report with us, please?

Mr. Kevin French: Absolutely. We will table that with the committee.

The one point I'd also like to mention is some of the co-operative work that we're doing as the province of Ontario with the federal government, which plays some role in looking at apprenticeship, and in particular the apprenticeship incentive grant. What we did in February, working with our colleagues at Service Canada, was send a letter out to all apprentices, just making sure they are aware of the federal apprenticeship incentive grant. Again, it's about completions and it's about our common objective of having apprentices who are going through the system actually finish their in-school and their on-the-job training and complete successfully.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that incentive money? What is it?

Mr. Kevin French: It's an incentive grant provided by the federal government; that's correct.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So let's say we're going to give you an extra \$1,000 or \$2,000 if you finish the program.

Mr. Kevin French: That's correct.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. Have you analyzed that ratio, 90% to 10%, in terms of how it works?

Mr. Kevin French: As I think the Auditor General's report indicates, other jurisdictions have looked at that. At this point, what we have done—as my colleague Patti Redmond indicated, the minister's action table that was set up a couple of years ago looked at this issue as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A couple of years ago. And did they conclude something? Is there a report?

Mr. Kevin French: There was a report to the minister at the time. It's noted in the Auditor General's report as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Could we have that report as well?

Mr. Kevin French: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. The ministry has 100 training consultants in the 26 field offices providing services such as registering apprentices and consulting with training providers and employers and other things that they do. There are about 35,000 employers. Evidently, their load has increased over the last couple of years, but there are no new consultants, no additional con-

sultants that I'm aware of. We're asking them to do a heck of a lot. How well can these 100 people do the job?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Just to begin to respond to your question, the ministry has since hired some additional employment and training consultants so that we have increased our capacity in this area to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How many do we have?

Mr. Kevin French: We have an additional 20 at the end of the fiscal year.

1340

Ms. Deborah Newman: So that is increasing the capacity in the system to support the work that our training consultants are doing. I think that's quite helpful.

Just to understand, again, the context of transforming Employment Ontario: We're moving toward a model where we have one-stop shopping for clients who are trying to access employment and training services. Our consultants are going to be broadly skilled as well, so that they can support a variety of employment and training programs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One of the complaints they made is that the focus of the ministry appears to be registration rather than completion. Are they correct? Are they wrong? Are we fixing that, or what?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Maybe I could just speak a little bit about the efforts that we're making to support completions.

Certainly, there has been a focus on increasing registrations, and we've been quite successful in terms of achieving higher numbers of registrants.

In terms of completions, the ministry is now really turning its attention—and Mr. French referenced a study that we'll table with the committee, with a school board looking at some of the reasons why some apprentices don't complete, so that we can benefit from that information.

We're also participating in the national apprenticeship survey, which is a federal-provincial-territorial study. This will give us data in a very comprehensive way about apprenticeship outcomes. That study is due to be completed toward the end of the summer. That's going to be very helpful to us. The disaggregated data for Ontario from that national apprenticeship survey—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So that should give us a whole lot of guidance in terms of what we could do, right?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes, it will. It will help us target much more our efforts with respect to completions in trades.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The worry was that the Centre for the Study of Living Standards reported in 2005 that Ontario had the third-lowest apprenticeship program completion rate among the 10 provinces. The construction and food and services trades sectors had the lowest completion rates, and the industrial electricians, ironworkers, mechanics and mobile crane operators had the highest.

Stats Canada did theirs in 2007-08 and said that of the three provinces they studied, they found that completion

rates were 59% in Alberta, 50% in Ontario, and 47% in New Brunswick. Construction trades had the lowest completion rate.

Clearly, there's a pattern showing that we've got a problem. Now, through this study we're finally, hopefully, going to be able to say, "We know, and we're going to do something."

Ms. Deborah Newman: You're absolutely right. I think this is going to give us a much better understanding of why some apprentices don't complete.

The only other piece I would add to that is that the ministry is also currently scoping out our own research project that will be specific to apprenticeship program targets and registrations and completions, so that we can augment the national apprenticeship survey.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In 2005, the minister's action table on apprenticeship was formed, and the committee suggested strategies for improving completion then. That was four years ago. They said we should:

- ensure that in-school training is relevant, current and appropriate;

- ensure that examinations are appropriate;

- improve the tracking and monitoring of apprentices as they progress through their programs, and provide supports, such as counselling, which I heard you say you're doing; and

- implement a program to help employers be good trainers and to improve the connections between workplace and in-school training.

I thought these were very clear directions in terms of what you could do. Deputy—because you were here earlier—have you looked at that, and what conclusions did you come up with to deal with those suggestions?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'll speak to the part that addresses your question in relation to what we are doing to encourage completions. A number of steps and measures have been taken. Certainly, our employment and training consultants are working very closely with those who are on their caseloads and trying to be proactive in counselling apprentices who may potentially be eligible to complete, to try to support them and move them forward to completion. They're encouraged to write their certificate of qualification exam as soon as possible after completing their apprenticeship program. The ministry is working collaboratively with training service delivery partners to make sure that certification exams can be written at the last in-school period so there isn't any loss in terms of retention of information and studying.

Really, ministry staff are assisting apprentices to schedule their examination to basically employ a number of other strategies to support them in completing. We're looking at accelerated in-school training for laid-off apprentices so that, if they are laid off, they can at least complete the in-school portion in a more upfront way. We're looking at pre-certification courses to support those who are writing exams and increase their pass rates. There are a number of measures, really, that are being taken to support completions and which I think

speak to a number of the recommendations that you mentioned.

I would just ask if staff would like to add to that.

M^{me} Marie-Lison Fougère: Also, one of the key recommendations of that report was actually to review compulsory certification, and subsequent to that, the government appointed Mr. Armstrong.

The Armstrong report was tabled with a specific look at compulsory certification out of basically a range of issues, and one of the key recommendations of the Armstrong report was for the government to also look at an all-trades institution, which is now leading to the introduction today of the bill on the college of trades.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Okay, now Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just have one or two quick questions. On page 5 of the report—it's under "Tracking Completion Rates"—the auditor said, "The Ministry needed information on apprenticeship completion and employment rates in relation to labour market demand. [It] agreed ... to implement outcome-based ... measures by January 2004," and to report after this. To date, the ministry has only publicly reported on the number of actual apprenticeship registrations, not completions. Why did that happen?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm going to ask Patti Redmond to speak to that.

Ms. Patti Redmond: I just want to make sure that I understand the question in terms of—I think that the ministry undertook to look at a performance management framework for this system, and we have been working on that as part of the overall Employment Ontario transformation. I think that the deputy spoke earlier about—

Mr. David Zimmer: But my question was, why did the ministry just report on the registrations for apprenticeship programs, that is, those who registered, but didn't report on the completions, those who finished?

Ms. Patti Redmond: I think the answer to that question is that the ministry is continuing to work on what the appropriate approach to what a completion is within the apprenticeship system. People enter into an apprenticeship program and they may leave for a variety of reasons. We need to work, as has been said earlier, on—

Mr. David Zimmer: So you didn't know what a completion was?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Well, I think that the ministry has agreed to use the national apprenticeship survey definition of a completion, and we're committed to tracking that.

Mr. David Zimmer: What's that definition?

Ms. Patti Redmond: I can pull it out for you. I don't have it right in front of me. I can undertake to get that to you.

Mr. David Zimmer: And when is that going to kick in?

Ms. Patti Redmond: When is it going to kick in? I think the issue is that we need to have the appropriate tracking systems in place to be able to report on the completion rate. The ministry is committed to doing that as part of the development of our systems.

1350

Mr. David Zimmer: What's the plan to have that up and running?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Basically, we're entering into a new information tracking system called the Employment Ontario Information System. It's being advanced in a staged way. We've just got a contract management module. We're adding a case management module—

Mr. David Zimmer: So what's the plan to get that up and running? By what date?

Ms. Deborah Newman: It will be fully complete by 2011-12. It's a very robust information management system. As Ms. Redmond indicated, the definition of "completion" has its complexities in terms of how that gets defined, and it's difficult to even make apples-to-apples comparisons.

Mr. David Zimmer: What are some of the elements of the complexity?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Maybe Patti can speak to that, but there are a variety of ways in which this gets tracked differently.

Ms. Patti Redmond: I think the issue is, again, that the apprenticeship system is an employment system, and people participating in it will learn at their own pace. So it isn't similar, in some ways, to the post-secondary system, where the courses are offered within—

Mr. David Zimmer: Can you help me with what are the key elements, the fundamental elements of a completion? What does a completion entail?

Ms. Patti Redmond: A completion entails the fact that the apprentice has finished all of their in-school training. There are generally three levels, but in some cases less and in some cases more, depending on the trade. Across the 154 trades that we have within the apprenticeship system, there are obviously different levels of complexity within that system. It also requires that the apprentice complete the on-the-job training component. I think in that particular case, different apprentices will move through that on-the-job training component at a different pace.

Then, in most cases, you write a certification exam. Not all trades require a certification exam, but for those that do, you must write that exam and pass—

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm just trying to struggle with the complexity or the—it seems to be stuck here. I don't understand why it takes from 2004 to potentially now 2011-12 to figure out what the definition of a completed apprenticeship program is. That's seven or eight years. I'm struggling with that.

Ms. Deborah Newman: I don't think it's the definition that we're talking about in terms of that length of time. I'm talking about having a really robust data information system, but the ministry already has an information system that allows it to do a certain level of tracking around completions. I think the new system is just going to give us much more detailed information that we can draw on.

In terms of the complexities, though, of just the definition of "completion," in addition to what Patti indicated,

there are questions like: If an individual chooses to leave one apprenticeship training program for another one, does that mean they're a non-completer? Is that counted as a non-completion because they leave one and pursue another, which does happen?

Some decide to discontinue the training program in a voluntary trade where they're not required to be certified, and they continue to work within the trade. Does that count as a non-completion? There are some that discontinue the training to go challenge the certification exam without completing the training. Is that a non-completion?

So there are a lot of nuances and complexities in determining and having apples-to-apples comparisons, depending on what jurisdictions actually include in the apprenticeship completion rate. So it makes it a little challenging. As I mentioned, even for those—

Mr. David Zimmer: You know, in the old days, when I went to high school, there were people going out and they would decide to become an apprentice: Somebody wanted to become a tool and die maker. It was very, very clear, because I had friends who did it. They said, "I'm going to find a job with a tool and die maker, and it's going to take me four years or five years, and I go through one, two, three stages, or four"—whatever it was—"and at the end of the time period, I'm a qualified tool and die maker." It was really simple. Now constituents come in and tell me they want to be a tool and die maker, and they can't even figure out what they have to do to become one, but they desperately want to become tool and die makers, and they'll probably be very good. They're just stuck. They can't figure it out, and I can't help them.

Ms. Patti Redmond: To jump in, I think that within—you're right. I think that there are a number of individuals who don't know how to begin the process. I think the system still has some of the same elements that you outlined in terms of your experience. I know that within the Employment Ontario offices in terms of our employment service providers, they help to support individuals who are interested in going into the trades. Specifically with respect to that is finding an employer who is willing to take them on as an apprentice. In some cases, people become an apprentice because they've been working for a particular employer, and they are willing to apprentice them after a period of time. Both ways are part of the system, but our Employment Ontario offices do try, with those 100 training consultants that we spoke about earlier and also within our employment service providers, to help individuals to understand what would be required in terms of—

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to ask one more question, then I'm done. What initiatives are under way to make sure that at the end of the day your plans for the apprenticeship program, broadly speaking, are going to match the needs of the market? By market, I mean the employer who's looking for apprentice X and the apprentice who's looking for the apprenticeship. How do we marry your plan with the market needs?

Ms. Deborah Newman: The ministry is very much looking at good labour market information, and is building that really good labour market information and looking at being able to link up the labour market demand with the trades and encouraging people to go into the trades that are very much in high demand. I think to some extent that happens now somewhat naturally, given that when the demand grows in a particular trade for a skilled tradesperson, then those kinds of placements are going to occur because there are jobs available in any event.

The ministry is also attempting to use that labour market information on high-demand trades to influence and incent people to go into those particular trades. Staff also work very closely in their communities with local employers to find out what's in demand and to ensure that apprentices are encouraged to go where the jobs are and where the needs are in the community. As we've mentioned before, through our participation in these apprenticeship surveys, the national survey and our own directory search, we'll be able to match the supply and demand, essentially, going forward to make sure that the labour market demands are where we're supporting apprentices to go.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Ms. Albanese.

Ms. Laura Albanese: I would like to speak about the literacy and basic skills program for a moment. I'm sure we're going to go back to the trades after. You mentioned, Deputy Minister, that you are developing a curriculum and common asset tool for this program. I would like to know more about that.

1400

Ms. Deborah Newman: Thank you for your question. Certainly the ministry feels that literacy, math and other essential skills are absolutely critical for individuals to find sustainable employment and to pursue higher education. One of the phenomena that we're observing now with laid-off workers is that, not infrequently, they have been working for 25 years in manufacturing, for example, and when they get laid off, they actually require literacy and essential skills before they can consider pursuing further education or being retrained for another career. So we're working with partners and service providers on the literacy and basic skills area to try to meet those needs for a skilled workforce.

In terms of the investment in that area, as well, as you know, the government currently commits \$75 million annually, and in the most recent budget committed to increasing funding to literacy and basic skills by \$90 million over the next two years. We're looking at community literacy, distance learning and workplace literacy.

I'm going to ask Patti to speak more specifically to the development of the standard curriculum.

Ms. Laura Albanese: Yes, and just before you answer, I'm interested to know if there is some work being done around the criteria of the programs. The auditor did mention that he had some concerns about the time that some learners remain in the program. One of

them was identified to have spent over seven years in the program. If we're trying to get people retrained for a job, that would seem quite extensive, unless there are other underlying problems.

Ms. Patti Redmond: Okay. Let me try to answer the questions, because I think you talked in your question about the work that we've done with respect to the literacy curriculum, and I think that work will help focus the training that is provided to individuals as part of the literacy and basic skills program. I should say, though, that, like the apprenticeship program, literacy learners do move through the program at their own pace. Some of them are not taking this training on a full-time basis. They may be working part-time or they may have child care issues and things like that. So it isn't a program, again, that has sort of a specific start and finish date.

I would also say that the literacy and basic skills program is learner-focused, so it does try to look at specifically what goals the individual is trying to achieve as part of participating in that program. For some of our literacy learners—for many of them—employment or further education and training is an important part of why they are participating in this program, but we do have literacy learners who have independence as a goal. The absence of literacy skills makes it difficult for them to be independent. So those are part of it.

In working on the literacy program, we have begun the process of developing a literacy and basic skills curriculum, but there is not currently a formalized curriculum available within the program. Our service providers use a variety of different tools that the ministry makes available to them and tools that they have developed themselves in order to provide the training to the individuals.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: When will that curriculum be finalized?

Ms. Patti Redmond: That curriculum will be available in 2011-12. We're working very closely with the literacy service providers in the development of that curriculum. It will need to be pilot-tested as part of the process, so there's the development of it and then there's the pilot-testing phase to make sure that it is effective and then rolling it out to all of the service providers that they're available.

As part of that curriculum, it will look at all of the learner pathways as I spoke about earlier, so independence, employment, credit study, post-secondary education and apprenticeship, and ensure that we have developed a curriculum that specifically focuses on all of the learner pathways for an individual who would be participating in the literacy and basic skills program, because, again, we want to make sure that it is focused on the needs of the clients that are participating. So we think this is an important part of having this as part of the literacy and basic skills program.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I also wanted to speak for a moment about the funding. The operating funding had remained the same for awhile and then, "the ministry has reduced a number of target services hours to be delivered, from 6.7 million to 5.6 million." The auditor

suggests, "Some of this reduction may be the result of efforts by the ministry to standardize and monitor the way service providers count their contact hours," because there seems to be quite a discrepancy in the contact hours.

What are you doing to move towards standardizing these contact hours? Is it because some agencies provide different types of service that they're not standardized? What's your comment on that?

Ms. Patti Redmond: Yes. As I said earlier, obviously all of our literacy and basic skills service providers are providing training, but some of them are providing it at different levels. So it goes anywhere from what is the equivalency to grade 1 up to what is essentially an equivalency to high school. So there is quite a broad range of literacy training that is occurring within the literacy and basic skills program, all of it being very important.

Right now, the ministry uses the contact hour as a means of tracking that, but I think we agree that we need to look at a different approach and move forward in terms of standardizing that approach. The literacy and basic skills program does have a set of performance measures that we hold agencies to account for in terms of performance, in terms of the number of clients that move on to further education and training or employment but as part of the Employment Ontario transformation that the deputy spoke about in her opening remarks, that we would be looking to improve that performance management framework for the literacy and basic skills program, that in the development of that we have—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: How long will that be? You're going to be looking at this different approach. What's the timeline there?

Ms. Patti Redmond: I think it's going to take us a couple of years in terms of, again, it's part of an overall set of strategies that—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: So it's 2011-12.

Ms. Patti Redmond: —include the literacy curriculum.

So they're all part of an overall approach to transforming the program. So it includes the development of curriculum, it includes improving the performance management system for literacy, and it includes an ability to look at measuring the skills that are attained by the learner while participating in the program that has that set curriculum. So it is part of an overall set of building blocks that are necessary.

But in the meantime, I think our literacy providers are continuing to provide very high-quality literacy services to their clients. We are working with them very closely on the new funding that the deputy spoke about in her remarks, the \$90 million more, in terms of how to target that funding, how to approach things like distance learning. I think one of the things that we've heard from our literacy service providers is about the ability of clients to participate in training, but recognizing that people have to do that at their own pace and when they're able to do it. So, where it's appropriate, an ability to offer a supported distance learning environment is also quite im-

portant to the overall approach that we have for the program.

1410

Ms. Marie-Lison Fougère: Just maybe two supplementaries that explain the length, the duration. We have four streams in this—anglophone, francophone, the deaf and also aboriginal, which is actually unique for Ontario, and Ontario distinguishes itself on that basis—so it takes more time.

The last point I would make is that all of that is also very much linked to the essential skills that have been defined by HRSDC, so that you can actually link the sort of transition paths that people have to go through in order to achieve specific levels. It's also tied to very specific literacy skills that are deemed to be absolutely essential in contemporary society. So it's not just about basic reading and writing. It is about computer use; it is about oral communication; it is about the ability to learn and to train. So it's a fairly complex process.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here.

First of all, I want to apologize for not being here for the initial statement. I had another meeting I had to be at. The reason I mention that is that some of the questions may have been answered in your initial notes.

To lay the groundwork, my questions aren't really as technical as what I've heard so far, because I'm not looking to set up an apprenticeship shop, to have apprentices. The questions will be directed toward getting information that I can give to my constituents as to why and how this program is working.

I was going to make the comment that as I was sitting here listening, I was starting to feel like I was in question period, where we have very good questions and very good answers, but they usually don't match up. I was a little concerned that that was happening here this afternoon. Somehow we got the feeling that the ministry is here to tell me how well things are working. The only reason I'm here is to find out how we as a committee, with our recommendations, can help solve the problems that the Auditor General pointed out during the investigation.

As I looked at the auditor's report, there was very little in it to deal with whether the curriculum was a good curriculum for the different trades. The overriding question that came out for me in the Auditor General's report was, how well are we doing with apprenticeships in Ontario? When we ask this question in question period, we get the comment that we are registering far more people into the apprenticeship programs than we ever have before. In fact, we're way ahead of where we expected to be at this point.

But then, when the Auditor General is trying to find out how well we're doing in successfully completing the courses, and how many people are actually getting their certificate in hand, that they are now journeymen, or

journeypersons, in whatever field they decided to take up, we don't have much information to give people to say how successful we are being, and how successful we want to be, and what we need to do to reach that success.

The old adage is, "If you don't know where you're going, every road will get you there." I want to make sure that we're not on the wrong road to go where we want to go.

So if I could just have some general comments on where we are at with setting up a system, that we can be as accurate or as forthcoming with information about completion as we are with starting.

Ms. Deborah Newman: Thank you. You're right that the auditor recognized the doubling of registrations in apprenticeship, and the growth in the system from 60,000 to 120,000 apprentices in the last few years, but recognized that we need to renew our focus on completions. So we've got a lot more people in the system, which is a good thing, but now, how do we find out (a) why a number are not completing, and (b) how do we support them in achieving higher rates of completion?

What we talked about, before you were able to join us, were a number of key focuses, but principally speaking to the creation of the new college of trades is really to raise the profile and status of the trades and to encourage a focus on the trades as a very viable career option for young people and others in terms of their career paths.

In terms of completions and looking at completions, we spoke to a number of areas in which we're working in the ministry to support increased completions, and also to gather better data about why apprentices may not be completing and receiving their certificates of qualification.

On the data side, we are participating in a national apprenticeship survey, and the disaggregated Ontario data will give us a lot better information about the reasons why some apprentices may not see their training through to completion, and that will help us begin to target our efforts to support higher rates of completion. So part of it is good data.

We're also scoping our own research study to try to address that and to achieve a level of understanding around that and good data, again, about supply and demand, and for high-demand trades to encourage apprentices to focus their efforts on those trades most likely to lead to full-time employment. We're also evaluating the Ontario youth apprenticeship program to make sure that it is meeting its objectives in supporting young people entering the trades.

So part of our efforts is around a better understanding, better data to help us focus our efforts and target completion activity, and in the meantime we're undertaking a number of measures to support existing apprentices to achieve the highest possible completion rates. I did speak to those; I'd be happy to outline those for you as well.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I guess my question, just to go a little further on that one: Apprenticeship is not new. It predates all of us in this room. Are you telling me that in all that time, all we've ever worried about is getting peo-

ple into the program? We've never kept records of how many people are successfully completing the program?

Ms. Deborah Newman: We do have some records in terms of completions. What we don't have is that qualitative information that tells us why people who aren't completing aren't completing—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We do know how many are completing?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes, we do know that approximately 50% are completing, so 50% are not completing.

We had some conversation about complexities around defining completion rates. It's difficult to compare ourselves to others; they become apples-to-oranges comparisons in a lot of cases, because the definition of completion varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. As I indicated, for example, if someone leaves a particular apprenticeship training program to pursue a different one, is that counted as a non-completion if they complete the other program? Some will choose to discontinue their training and challenge the exam. Is that a non-completion of training? Different jurisdictions have counted that differently.

With the national apprenticeship survey, now everyone will use the same definition. We'll get some better relative data and a better understanding of those nuances and the qualitative understanding of why people may not complete.

So we do have some completion data. It's just difficult to consistently compare ourselves with others.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I guess my question would be, then, what do we need to put in place that would put those two together? Obviously, in the last number of years we've spent a lot of time, effort and money to get people to register in apprenticeship programs. We seem to have no idea—we all know how many came in and we know how much we've invested to get them that far, but we don't seem to have anything in place to see about the ones we did three years ago or why it is that they aren't being successful. They've dropped out and they're gone. We have new ones coming in and we keep adding more resources to bring more new ones in, but we don't know what's happening to the ones who didn't complete?

1420

It would seem to me that we need to put something in place that would follow them all the way through, from the time we hire them till the time they retire, that somehow we keep records of how successful we are in providing what we're providing. What would we need to do to improve that?

Ms. Deborah Newman: We do have an information management system, and it essentially tracks apprentices through the various stages of their journey through to receiving their certificate of qualification. In the future, we're going to be tracking more data and in a more longitudinal way, such as you're suggesting, and we're developing a new information management system, I&IT system, to track that.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to be more specific. The last time, the minister came in and said, "I've got another \$25 million from the federal government to encourage more training programs in the apprenticeship and training field." At the time you do that, is there not something in place that measures where would be the best place to put it? It would seem to me that looking at why we're failing is more important at this point than finding out how many more people we can put into a failing program.

Any program that's only 50% successful is a total failure. When our universities, our elementary schools or any other training facility says, "We only succeed with 50% of the people we start with," we would never consider that a success. Have we never considered that the resources should be put towards finding out why we're not being successful as opposed to putting more people in the system?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm going to ask others to comment a little bit more on the use of the funding and tracking, but I guess I would say two things. One is that I agree we need better data in terms of understanding why people don't complete and to try and improve those completion rates. We have undertaken and are undertaking a number of measures in support of that.

The other is that I don't want to characterize this as a failed system in the sense that we have a very significant number of apprentices in Ontario—120,000—and in the last five years we've issued 80,000 new certificates of qualification. Those are a lot of journeypersons. So there are some measures of success, and I think we can do better and will do better in terms of supporting a higher completion rate.

Maybe Patti or Kevin—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: That's fine. As long as we're working on it. All I'm looking for are some suggestions of what you think we could recommend to government that they do to improve the system. I'm not sitting here trying to criticize the system. I think, collectively, we've got to make it work better.

There was one other thing. There was a bill introduced just recently about labour mobility and the challenges we're going to face with the apprenticeship program and the requirement we make it completely mobile across Canada. This is going back to the apprenticeship ratios. Why would anybody stay in Ontario waiting for a placement to go into apprenticeship when we can't find one and we can go to any other province and they have a one-to-one ratio so they can find jobs in the apprenticeship program and get into the apprenticeship program? How do we keep our people at home?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Sorry. You're speaking to—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We're the only ones who have three-to-one ratios in certain skills. So if I want to be—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He's speaking to the bill that was just introduced.

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: If I want to be an electrician, why would I take an apprenticeship in Ontario when I

can't find a placement and when I can go to one of the other provinces and they have a one-to-one ratio? In fact, there are some that have more apprentices than they do tradespeople. So why would I stay here, and how are we going to deal with that?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Again, the labour mobility legislation that was introduced last week is really intended to remove barriers to opportunities for skilled workers. If you're a Canadian, you're a Canadian, so you ought to be able, if you're certified, to move to another province or territory without having to complete additional training or become recertified—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: But my question is, how do we keep them here to go through the training? Because anybody who's trained somewhere else can come back here and work. In fact, our apprenticeship program would die because we have such restrictive measures to keep them here. Is the ministry looking at levelling the playing field for that too?

Ms. Deborah Newman: We want to ensure that trades and professions are addressing high-demand occupations and where there are skill shortages or where there are projected to be. So the extent to which that happens means we will be able to keep our Ontarians in Ontario. But there shouldn't be an impediment to a Canadian moving from one province or territory in the country to another. The European Union has had labour mobility for some time. I think Canada's Premiers are now committed to ensuring that workers have that same mobility and that they don't face barriers and obstacles in this country.

I think our business here in Ontario is to make sure that we're supporting skills development in high-demand areas and where there are skills shortages. It's really using good, targeted labour market information and supporting workers to be in high-demand areas, because with retirements in the future and demographic changes, we're going to be facing skills shortages. So I think we've really got to support our workers staying in Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: But is there not a need to make sure that if we're going to standardize the mobility, we also have to standardize the training? If we in Ontario believe that it requires three journeypersons to have an apprentice—because as soon as you increase or decrease the ratio, it means we decrease the quality of the training and we end up with all of our tradespeople having trained in provinces where it's one to one—aren't we being unfair to our own people, that they have to go to a higher standard and wait longer to get training, just to be replaced by people coming in under our legislation?

Ms. Deborah Newman: One of the functions of the new college of trades, if the legislation is passed, will be for industry-driven determination of appropriate ratios. So the college of trades will be charged with and be well positioned to determine what those appropriate ratios are going forward, and be engaging employers, apprentices, journeypersons and others in determining what the appropriate ratios are.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: So the college would be able to do what I'm suggesting would need to be done?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes, ensuring that our workers are competitive, that health and safety is not compromised, but that whatever the appropriate ratio is, it's determined by the industry.

Ms. Marie-Lison Fougère: Also, if I may just add, under labour mobility, there's a high percentage—we have the red seal trades, which is a nationally recognized certification standard, and in fact a lot of our Ontario tradespeople are part of that red seal. So actually, that makes them very competitive.

The other thing that I may add is that as part of labour mobility, one of the things that will happen with respect to the trades is that where there are non-red-seal trades that need to be looked at, they'll be a matching process. Only where the scope of practice of those trades is recognized as being equivalent will the tradespeople be able to be recognized as certified.

While labour mobility doesn't deal specifically with ratios and the college of trades would, eventually, if the bill is passed, labour mobility does have—there are checks and balances. It is about maintaining standards; it's not about lowering the standards. Also, it's up to every jurisdiction to even upgrade standards if it feels that, in fact, in a modern economy we need to upgrade standards, which is not necessarily related to ratio; it just has to do with the kinds of competencies that you have to have in order to be recognized and certified.

1430

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): The problem that we have here, and we see it in our constituency offices day after day, is that we're encouraging young people to become apprentices, and they cannot get a placement because of the ratios. I had one young fellow who phoned over 200 employers in an attempt to get a placement as an apprentice, and he's in his third year. He can't get it. I say to him, "Why not go to Alberta, work for two years, get your journeyman and come on back," because with the new labour mobility, he's guaranteed that he can come back—red seal program and all the rest of it.

Why are we chasing our young people out of our province? Why are we doing that? It doesn't make any sense to me. If a one-to-one ratio is good for every other province, why isn't it good for us? Why are we chasing them out?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I think a point well made, but I expect, likely, that the deputy is at a loss to answer it. I think it's a political decision.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes, I think it is a political decision.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In relation to the enforcement of legislation on restricted trades, the Auditor General did an on-site visit to motive power shops—I hate that word "motive"; there's got to be a different word—where "training consultants have found ... unlicensed workers ... doing restricted work illegally." It's a

challenge in this sector, evidently. They haven't been advocating for increased enforcement, so the Auditor felt that the ministry should be more aware of the Ministry of Transportation enforcement activity for "licensing businesses to issue vehicle safety certificates." That's one issue.

Tim Armstrong in his 2008 report said that "requirements for compulsory certification will not be fully effective unless there are comprehensive enforcement mechanisms, accompanied by meaningful sanctions, to deter widespread contravention." What are we doing about that?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'll begin and then ask if staff would like to add to that. In terms of the uncertified worker working in certified trades, as I indicated, we're working very closely with MTO as well as the Ministry of Labour to ensure that we can support them in their enforcement and compliance activities, that they can access all of our data with respect to their worksite inspections. So that's sort of one—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So you're working with them; I understand. But Armstrong, in his report from 2008, said that we need an enforcement mechanism quickly—I'm assuming he might have meant quickly. That was 2008. We're now in 2009, so I'm assuming this talking with other ministries takes time, that developing an enforcement mechanism takes time? If so, how long might it take to have these mechanisms in place?

Ms. Deborah Newman: In terms of enforcement activity, I'm going to turn to one of my colleagues, whoever can speak to the enforcement activity piece.

Mr. Kevin French: Thanks for the question. Just to respond to the actions that have been taken to date, on October 17, 2008, the ministry entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Labour that allows them to access our data so that they can do on-site verification to address the issue that has been noted in the Auditor General's report. We're also, as the deputy indicated earlier, working with the Ministry of Transportation to enter into a sharing agreement, as is the Ministry of Labour, as a model. So we have implemented one with the Ministry of Labour, and we are working with the Ministry of Transportation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that agreement, again, does what?

Mr. Kevin French: It allows an inspector to ask for an individual's name, and we can verify whether they are registered as an apprentice or journeyman.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So it allows an inspector to ask for the name, which they couldn't do before?

Mr. Kevin French: They didn't have access to the data. We now have the legal provisions, under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, to have those provisions in place. So it was a privacy issue, to your point about the time it took to do that. It's a formal agreement to ensure that all of the freedom of information provisions are respected.

Just going back to the comment about the spirit in which the recommendations are made: As far as more

that could be done, clearly there are indications that there is more that could be done, and we have taken some early steps on that.

If I could build, for one second, just on the administration of the apprenticeship: We've also undertaken to look at where the business processes could be improved for apprenticeship as well. We haven't actually talked about that. Again, it's about improving it so that employment and training consultants can focus on ensuring that apprentices are getting the support they need, so that we can get to the completions, which has been part of the discussion we've had here today.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So now they have access to the data legally—I understand—and it allows inspectors to ask for the name.

Tim Armstrong was saying that there should be comprehensive enforcement mechanisms with meaningful sanctions. Are you also dealing with that, or is that not necessary?

Ms. Deborah Newman: In looking at enforcement and self-regulatory mechanisms that would fall under the college of trades, if that entity in fact comes into being—and maybe I can ask Patti to speak to that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I suspect they have the numbers to do it. So, they will have that power to be able to deal with enforcement and sanctions?

Ms. Patti Redmond: One of the objects of the college would be to receive and investigate complaints against members of the college and to deal with issues of discipline, misconduct, incompetence and incapacity.

As part of the proposed bill, similar to what is available within other regulatory colleges, the college itself would look at complaints about the competency of members and have the ability to deal with those particular issues in a self-regulatory environment and—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I got it. So it also includes this issue that I'm raising. You listed a whole number of things. It wasn't necessarily this particular issue I raised, but you're saying it is: They will have control over this.

Ms. Patti Redmond: I just want to make sure I understand your question. I think the college, in addition to the things that my colleague Mr. French talked about, is an important part of what Mr. Armstrong was getting at in his recommendation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. So, hopefully, the college will have the ability to have enforcement mechanisms and sanctions where there are unlicensed workers doing restricted work.

Ms. Marie-Lison Fougère: One thing that we need to be clear about is that the Minister of Labour retains a very important role in terms of enforcement. So, whatever the college of trades would do through the complaint processing mechanism and so on, which is typical of self-regulatory bodies, it doesn't replace the role that the Minister of Labour is legally authorized to play in terms of inspections of sites and so on and so forth. So, if anything, you get two complementary mechanisms, which should improve enforcement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's great. It's not comforting, but it's great. When the minister acts, it's great. When they don't, then it's another power that is there that may not be used. But it's good to know that he, in this case, has the power to do that.

I want to talk briefly about the apprenticeship training tax credit. Marie-Lison Fougère was there when I raised this issue with the minister and the deputy, and they both said it was the Minister of Finance who has control of this. I said, "But you're the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. You don't have any say, and you don't know what's going on? The Ministry of Finance is the only body that has control of this?" I was a bit alarmed by it then.

And the auditor is saying now that you really should work more closely with the Minister of Finance, and the deputy says, "We are." I didn't get that impression a couple of years ago when we did that, and I still get the feeling that somehow you're working with them but I don't feel any comfort in that either.

1440

Most eligible trades are in the motive power, construction and industrial sectors. The ministry has not yet obtained current information from the Ministry of Finance on the level of activity in each trade or trade sector, so the auditor believes that a review of the program effectiveness would be timely. I agree.

You say you're working closely with them, but is that question answered or are you yet to deal with that with the Minister of Finance with respect to not having yet obtained current info on the level of activity in each trade or trade sector?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I would probably reiterate the earlier position, in the sense that the apprenticeship training tax credit is administered by the Ministry of Finance and that MTCU's role is really very much just to promote that tax credit to encourage more employers to hire apprentices.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand that.

Ms. Deborah Newman: So in terms of the relative roles and responsibilities, that's it. That's our role. We, of course, have no transactions between employers, with Revenue Canada, with the Ministry of Finance, so when I talk about working with the Ministry of Finance, it will be to conduct an evaluation of the extent to which this tax credit is helpful and effective in encouraging employers to hire apprentices.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I understand you're going to try to do that. I'm alarmed that every time we meet we have the same discussion, and I have no doubt you will talk to them; I just don't know that we're going to get the information.

So the recommendation by the auditor was that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities should work with the Minister of Finance to evaluate whether it's achieving the expected outcomes and whether improvements are needed to enhance its effectiveness. That was the question they raised.

You are responsible for this in terms of reporting to us about it, but they're not here. So when we ask you the questions, all you can say is, "Yeah, they're in charge, they're doing this." It's a terrible situation to be put in when I'm asking you the questions and they've got the answers and there's no sharing of information. I find that terribly inadequate. Do you think we're going to be able to get the information? If so, when?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Well, as I indicated, I appreciate your frustration, but we are working with finance to do an evaluation, because our interest is in ensuring that this is an effective mechanism for promotion of apprenticeship and for employers to be incented to hire apprentices. So we will work with them to determine whether this particular program is meeting its objectives.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The ministry has increased annual apprenticeship registrations by 64%—and the minister is proud of these numbers too, by the way—since the 2002 audit. So you've added 20 new apprenticeship trades over the past five years, to bring the total to 153 in four sectors: construction, industrial, service and motive. The largest increase in registration has been in the service trades.

The results of expanding into new trades such as call centres have been mixed, where they say many call centre trade apprentices quit during the first six months of employment. Do you feel, Deputy or others, that this reflects the new economy that you were talking about in your comments earlier? That's the first question.

The second is: Is that addressing the skill shortages we have—that is very documented, by the way; it's clearly documented; we know this—where many sectors are telling us that in the next 10 years, as people retire, we won't have the trades to be able to do that? So it's not as if we need this information. It's already available.

We're creating most of the new apprentices in the new service sector area, but my feeling is, as happy as the minister is with the additional numbers, that we're not addressing the areas of skills shortages in those fields that are critical to our economy. How are we dealing with that?

Ms. Deborah Newman: What I can tell you is that 63% of all new registrations in 2008-09 are in these top 10 trades. Those are: (1) automotive service technician; (2) electrician—construction and maintenance; (3) hairstylist; (4) carpenter; (5) cook; (6) early childhood educator; (7) industrial mechanic/millwright; (8) plumber; (9) information technology contact centre—customer care agent; and (10) truck and coach technician. Those are the top 63% of new registrations.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can I ask you again—sorry. That was a list of the top 10 categories, and I got the first four. Automotive, construction and maintenance?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Automotive is the first. Electrician is the second; electrician—construction and maintenance; Hairstylist.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hairstylist is three.

Ms. Deborah Newman: Third.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Wow. That's impressive. Okay.

Ms. Deborah Newman: I think I'm keeping that industry in business. General carpenter is fourth. Cook; early childhood educator; industrial mechanic/millwright; plumber; information technology—customer care agent; and truck and coach technician.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Coach technicians?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Truck and coach technician. Those are the top 10.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. The bulk of these new ones are in the service area. Is that correct, or no?

Ms. Deborah Newman: No, I actually wouldn't say that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The report says that the "largest increase in registrations has been in the service trades." They call it "the service trades." Is that something that comes from the auditor, or research?

Mr. Jim McCarter: Call centres would be an example of that. There are a number of different apprenticeships in the service sector. Some of those—I'm not even sure if "hairstylist" falls in the service sector or not. It could; I'm not sure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's high.

Ms. Deborah Newman: I think, of that list I gave you, probably a hairstylist is the one that's in the service sector, and call centre is the—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A nation of hairstylists. Okay, thank you very much. That's fine for me. Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Ms. Sandals.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just a quick question about the trades. What I see in my constituency office is that the issue of finding apprenticeship positions, the actual placement, seems to be top. It isn't just the ratio issue; it's broader than that.

I understand that you've registered the apprentices and they've taken course work and, in various different pathways, end up somehow getting certified, we hope. At the point at which they become a journeyman, do we then re-register them as journeymen? Does anybody have a list of who the journeymen are?

Ms. Deborah Newman: Yes, would be my understanding. We register them initially as apprentices, and we do then register them as journeypersons when they pass that certification exam and get a certificate.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I presume that would pass over to the new college of trades, that whole registration process, if the legislation passes.

Ms. Patti Redmond: When they become certified as a journeyperson, yes.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We haven't really talked at all about the two programs that came over from the feds. That's actually what I hear about the most in my constituency office: the skills training piece; the Employment Ontario and the self-employment benefits. I must say that there's a certain amount of frustration, not necessarily around the rules but around the timeliness of

getting responses to applications. That would be the thing that I hear about.

1450

I do hear about things like, for example, under the self-employment benefits program—it almost sounds like people are being denied the program even though they may be technically qualified. It seems to be a volume issue. Are there thresholds on that one for the maximum number of people who can go into the program?

Ms. Deborah Newman: I'm going to ask Kevin French to respond to that one.

Mr. Kevin French: Thanks for the question. We certainly try to respond to the requests you get as an MPP in a timely way.

I'm going to start with the process around skills development and self-employed benefits. As you mentioned, and as the Auditor General has commented in his report, there are clearly areas of friction as clients move through the system, and you are experiencing that, as an MPP, at times. The system we inherited from the federal government, transferred to the province—we basically have parallel systems running at a community level, in your riding and in your communities. Our job, with our service providers, whether it be the local college or the Y or whoever is providing services, is to make sure we're connecting people to the right service, which in some cases is a challenge.

The two specific programs, the skills development program—an individual who is laid off is assessed. There's a consultant who sits down with that individual and assesses whether training is the right option for them to pursue. In an ideal world, it takes five days for an individual to come in and be seen by someone in an assessment centre. We have cases where there are significant layoffs—and your community is one of those—where that service target may not be met. We've taken measures to address them, and I can talk in more detail about that.

When they're assessed, if training is the preferred option by the individual, we ask the individual to actually explore what training options they have. The Auditor General, again, comments on that. We ask the individual to go out and research and say, "Make sure that the training you're pursuing is the best for you as an individual." So it's client-focused. That can take some time. We've made some changes to that since we've had the program to make sure it's not overly onerous and that they are exploring three options for training and that isn't seen as a barrier.

The next step is sitting down with the individual and asking, "If you're pursuing training, what income support do you have, and how are you going to live as you're going through the training process?" That takes some time as well, because we're talking about an individual who has been laid off. It's a traumatic situation. We're asking them to go through a number of steps because, from a public administration point of view, we're investing a significant number of public dollars in them so that they can go off and do training to carry forward.

The next piece that you may hear about as far as an area where there is sometimes some friction is if they say, “I’ve decided I want training, and I want to start it tomorrow.” The training may not start for a month; it may not start until the next big intake at a college. We’ve taken some steps to address that as well. Then there’s the monitoring of the client as they undertake the training over a period of time.

So it’s a program that is client-centred. From a program administration point of view, we ask for a lot of steps to be undertaken by the clients to get them through the process, and that’s where you will hear some frustration.

The next is if we actually say no. If we say no to training, the process is that an individual gets feedback on why they’re being turned down for training. In most cases, the training is either longer-term or at a higher level than we’re willing to support. A good example is if they say, “I want to go back and become a teacher at a university.” This is not what the program is set up to do. The second is around whether you’re actually unemployed and meet an “unemployed” criterion. A number of individuals—and, I know, from your particular riding—anticipate being laid off and want to be proactive and get going. The rules that are in place prevent that from happening. That’s a real problem and we see that every day.

As far as why we’re denying, the third area is around the school not being registered. We have our public colleges, but we also have a lot of training undertaken through the program that was reviewed by the auditor for private career colleges. We need to ensure that those private career colleges are registered with the ministry to ensure they offer good-quality training. So those are three of the reasons a constituent will come to your office.

The recommendations that are put forward by the Auditor General I think, from administering the program, are very balanced. We had undertaken to make some changes to the program when we inherited the program. I think the Auditor General points to cost variation in a

client getting training. A very concrete example, which is in the report, is a dental hygienist versus a dental technician. One is an investment of \$56,000. Could it have been done a lot more cheaply and more effectively? The answer is yes. So we have put a cap in place of \$28,000. To go beyond that requires an extra level of oversight to ensure that it’s related to dependant care or child care expenses—that there’s a reason that we would go beyond that.

The only other thing—and I’m happy to entertain some follow-up, because there has been a lot of interaction among MPPs’ offices and my staff over the last while—that is pointed out here in the Auditor General’s report: Our primary consideration was making sure that we had uninterrupted service for what was transferred to us. We obviously see that there’s room for improvement and we’ve taken some small steps, but when we look at training in a customer-driven model going forward, there are bigger things that we will focus on over the next while.

Now, the reality is that with the significant number of layoffs, with a significant demand for training, you are using the programs we have in place to make that happen.

Interruption.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And I think we have a bell going, Chair, so I’ll just follow up with you privately.

The Chair (Mr. Norman W. Sterling): Thank you very much. I’d like to thank all of the participants here today. As a follow-up, we asked some questions and I think you’re going to forward some information to us to those questions.

If the rest of the witnesses and the staff would leave fairly soon so we can have just a brief discussion with our researcher with regard to giving instructions as to how we might want the report prepared.

Thank you very much. We appreciate your attendance here and look forward to receiving that additional information. Thank you.

The committee continued in closed session at 1455.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 13 May 2009

2008 Annual Report, Auditor General: Section 3.08, employment and training division.....	P-371
Ms. Deborah Newman, deputy minister, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities	
Ms. Marie-Lison Fougère, assistant deputy minister, strategic policy and programs division	
Mr. Kevin French, former assistant deputy minister, employment and training division	
Ms. Patti Redmond, director, programs branch, strategic policy and programs division	

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Chair / Président

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Carleton–Mississippi Mills PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa PC)

Mrs. Laura Albanese (York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston L)

M^{me} France Gélinas (Nickel Belt ND)

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford PC)

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans L)

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa PC)

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph L)

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Carleton–Mississippi Mills PC)

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex L)

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale L)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina ND)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Katch Koch

Staff / Personnel

Ms. Susan Viets, research officer,
Research and Information Services