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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS  
(HANSARD)

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SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
**CROWN CORPORATIONS**

**Vancouver**

**Wednesday, January 16, 2008**

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JOHN RUSTAD, MLA, CHAIR

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
CROWN CORPORATIONS**

Vancouver  
Wednesday, January 16, 2008

*Chair:* \* John Rustad (Prince George–Omineca L)

*Deputy Chair:* \* Guy Gentner (Delta North NDP)

*Members:* \* Iain Black (Port Moody–Westwood L)  
\* Ron Cantelon (Nanaimo–Parksville L)  
Joan McIntyre (West Vancouver–Garibaldi L)  
\* Dennis MacKay (Bulkley Valley–Stikine L)  
\* John Yap (Richmond–Steveston L)  
Corky Evans (Nelson–Creston NDP)  
\* John Horgan (Malahat–Juan de Fuca NDP)  
\* Chuck Puchmayr (New Westminster NDP)

*\*denotes member present*

*Clerk:* Craig James

*Committee Staff:* Jonathan Fershau (Committee Research Analyst)

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*Witnesses:* Frank Borowicz (Chair, Board of Directors, Industry Training Authority)  
Kevin Evans (CEO, Industry Training Authority)  
Jeff Nugent (Industry Training Authority)  
Geoff Stevens (Industry Training Authority)  
Sandy Steward (Industry Training Authority)



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MINUTES

# SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN CORPORATIONS



Wednesday, January 16, 2008

1 p.m.

Pavilion Ballroom AB, Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel  
1088 Burrard St., Vancouver

**Present:** John Rustad, MLA (Chair); Guy Gentner, MLA (Deputy Chair); Iain Black, MLA; Ron Cantelon, MLA; John Horgan, MLA; Dennis MacKay, MLA; Chuck Puchmayr, MLA; John Yap, MLA

**Unavoidably Absent:** Corky Evans, MLA; Joan McIntyre, MLA

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.
2. Pursuant to its terms of reference, the Committee reviewed the Industry Training Authority.

Witnesses:

- Kevin Evans, Chief Executive Officer
- Frank Borowicz, Chair, Board of Directors
- Geoff Stevens, Vice-President, Industry Relations
- Sandy Steward, Vice-President, Customer Service
- Jeff Nugent, Director of Policy and Research

3. The Committee recessed from 2:55 p.m. to 3:04 p.m.
4. The Committee met *in camera* to consider its review of the Industry Training Authority.
5. The Committee met in public session to discuss future meetings.
6. The Committee adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

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John Rustad, MLA  
Chair

Craig James  
Clerk Assistant and  
Clerk of Committees





WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2008

The committee met at 1:07 p.m.

[J. Rustad in the chair.]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Good afternoon. Sorry about being a few minutes late starting. I'm John Rustad. I'm the MLA for Prince George–Omineca. I'm the Chair of our Select Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

It's a great pleasure today to have the Industry Training Authority here. I'll allow you to introduce yourselves, but just before we do that, we'll go around and introduce the members. If I could start on my far right.... He's not quite looking.

**C. Puchmayr:** Chuck Puchmayr, MLA for New Westminster and the NDP Labour critic.

**G. Gentner (Deputy Chair):** Guy Gentner, MLA, Delta North.

**C. Puchmayr:** You threw me when you said far right.

**J. Horgan:** John Horgan, Malahat–Juan de Fuca

**J. Rustad (Chair):** And now to my even farther right.

**J. Yap:** I'm John Yap, the MLA for Richmond–Steveston.

**D. MacKay:** Dennis MacKay, the MLA for Bulkley Valley–Stikine, and Smithers is home.

**R. Cantelon:** I'm Ron Cantelon. I'm the MLA for Nanaimo–Parksville.

**I. Black:** I'm Iain Black. I'm the MLA for Port Moody–Westwood.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** With us today, also, is Craig James, the Clerk of Committees, as well as Jonathan, who is working with us — and, of course, the Hansard staff as well.

The goal of today is to review the service plan of the Industry Training Authority. With that, I'd like to turn it over to you to introduce the people you have with you. Then I guess we'll start with you, with the review.

### Industry Training Authority

**F. Borowicz:** With your permission, I would invite Kevin Evans, who is our new CEO, to introduce the people who are here from the Industry Training Authority today.

**K. Evans:** My name is Kevin Evans, and I am the chief executive officer. It's a position that I've held for the last three months, so I obviously know all the answers. Fortunately, we have some folks with us today

who have been with the ITA for a considerably longer period of time and will be able to, I think, answer all of your questions. Of course, those we can't answer this afternoon, we'll be getting back to you forthwith.

On my right is Sandy Steward. Sandy is our vice-president of customer service. On the far left, is Geoff Stevens. Geoff is our vice-president of industry relations. Both of these individuals have been with the ITA since the very beginning, just about, when they had three or four people working out of the backs of their cars.

Frank Borowicz shares with me, in addition to a taste for fine wine, the distinction of being a rookie as well. He is the chair of our board. He was appointed in the spring of 2007. So we're a dynamic duo, we like to think. But we're still cutting our teeth, and our feet are still a little bit wet.

That said, we also have in the gallery today some other members of our senior team, so we're truly ready for, hopefully, answering most of what you can throw at us today. Jeff Nugent is our director of research and policy. Sue Thomas is our director of finance and administration; Lisa Dooling, our director of communications and marketing; and from the Ministry of Economic Development, our liaison with that ministry, Bev Verboven.

We actually have been looking forward to this occasion, and the reason is that all of us who work at the ITA, and certainly the people here today, believe that the ITA is a Crown corporation with a mission that matters, one that is very vital for the future of this province. Not everyone goes to work and has a front-line opportunity to make a fundamental and lasting difference with what they do for a living, but we believe we do. We're grateful for that, and we're grateful for the opportunity today to talk to you about what it is we do on behalf of the people of British Columbia.

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You know, it's a mission that matters, because fundamentally the ITA's mission is about potential, about realizing individual potential at the first instance. Each of us arrives in this world with skills and talents, and some would argue that life is a journey of realizing those skills and talents — your potential.

We at the ITA are in a privileged position to facilitate that process. We know that for every one of the nearly 38,000 apprentices and trainees we currently serve, things like establishing a career, finding a direction, earning a good living and fulfilling your potential is life-saving stuff. You can only imagine the story of the young woman who is in this picture on the screen and what a career in the trades has meant to her life and the direction she is now taking.

We take that very, very seriously, and it is a realization that drives the ITA's vision. That vision is British Columbians having affordable access to quality, responsive, integrated and accountable industry training that meets the needs of industry and learners. I just want to highlight a couple of those words very quickly, because they were all, obviously, very carefully chosen.

Affordable to the individual and also to the taxpayers of British Columbia.

Access. Access means close to home. It means a variety of delivery models. It means alternatives to traditional block release.

Quality means top-of-the-line, leading-edge, current programming.

Responsive not only to the economy, and the global economy, but also to the needs of our learners, our employers and our training providers.

Integrated refers to the notion that in the global economy, we're going to have to be moving back and forth, laddering and bridging between a variety of careers, professions and trades. That speaks to integration.

Of course, accountability is part of what we're doing here today — studying our service plan and our other reporting mechanisms so that the people of British Columbia are assured that the operations are transparent, accountable and efficient. It's more than just realizing individual potential, because as people collectively fulfil their individual potential, they further the realization of this province's abundance of potential. We believe the ITA's mission speaks to that.

Effective governance of B.C.'s industry training system. Timely supply of skilled labour for industry. Career development opportunities for individual British Columbians and industry leadership of the system, which assures relevance and effectiveness of outcomes.

Before we go much further, I want to ensure that we are on the same page with respect to what we mean when we talk about industry training. It means a lot of things to a lot of different people, and frankly, the term "apprenticeship" doesn't quite cover the territory. The term "industry training" is used to really describe a model, a combination of work-based and technical training, which is typically — this technical training — off the jobsite, in a classroom.

It sounds simple enough, but that is very much a formula that has come from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. We are now having industry, modern industry, saying to us that this is a model that has tremendous potential to train workers in the 21st century. I'll be talking a bit more about that.

The previous bullet noted that a distinguishing feature of industry training is that it is industry training in that the skills, requirements, standards and outcomes are defined by industry.

The successful completion of a program results in a credential from the province, which is issued by the ITA. This is a very important point. It is not confined to what we might refer to as the traditional trades. Certainly, the focus of the ITA in almost the first four years of its operation has been on the traditional trades, if you will: the carpentry, the plumbing, the welding. As we mature and grow, we see the scope of the industries covered by this model increasing, and the reason is that industry is demanding it.

We have recently been in discussions with the digital entertainment industry in British Columbia. They're coming to us because they're saying that the students they are getting out of the classroom and on to the

production floor.... It's about another year and a half before they are actually productive. What they want is a model where they can learn the technical but where they can also, on the work floor, learn the practical in a real-life work environment.

Who would have thought, just a few years ago, that we may have an industry training program for the digital entertainment industry in British Columbia? They view that as key to their continuing competitiveness in British Columbia and being able to anchor and grow this industry in this province.

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Finally, not to make too fine a point of it or be too cute, we are not called the "trades" training authority; we are the Industry Training Authority — workers on the job earning while they're learning, rather than in a vocational classroom. You know, for taxpayers this is a highly efficient form of training, because industry is stepping up and sharing a lot of the responsibility and the costs — as you see there, for 80 percent of the training.

The time has never been better for us to meet like this. The time has never been better for us as a province to be focusing on this thing called industry training. We need to look no further than all of the help-wanted signs. We need to look no further than you in your constituencies over the Christmas break and, I'm sure, the conversations that you had with many of your constituents. Small business people in particular are saying that the number one concern, the number one thing that's keeping them up at night is finding people.

Well, that is merely the initial breezes of a storm that is on the horizon. We know it's coming, we can see it coming, and we've got to be ready for it.

What's fuelling it right now is, of course, British Columbia's hot economy. The Conference Board of Canada this week predicted that B.C. can expect the unemployment rate to be in the neighbourhood of 4 percent for the next five years.

Now, one of the defining characteristics of our economy historically has been that it's cyclical; it's tied to the natural resource marketplace. That cycle is now standing on its head, because no longer are we going to be doing this. The Conference Board and other economists are saying that when the economy takes a downturn or when the resource sector takes a downturn, chances are there will be enough demand in other sectors of the economy that we will be riding 4 percent unemployment.

This is terrific news. We're in a stretch of relatively high and stable demand for labour, the likes of which B.C. has never before seen in its history. That's great news on the demand side, but it's a little complicated when you interface that with the supply side.

The supply side is challenged by things like this: demographics. You've all heard the stories, the coming tsunami of baby-boom retirements by 2015. Two will be retiring for every one new entrant. This is a phenomenon, again, that is unprecedented in our history. While we've always gone like this — think of a line — the line is flattening out a little bit in terms of the unemployment rate. Now we've got this other line

that's intersecting, the demographics, which is the labour pool now actually shrinking.

What are the implications of that? The implication is that we're not going to have enough people. This is a graph that's a little hard to read. Let me explain it to you. The projection is that between 2005 and 2015 there will be a million job openings in British Columbia. We currently have approximately 650,000 young people K-to-12 in our schools in British Columbia. Assuming for a moment that all 650,000 of those are going to enter the workforce, which is, I think, an unrealistic assumption, we would still have a gap of 350,000 jobs by 2015.

This is a very, very rough proxy. We are working very closely with our colleagues at Economic Development and other ministries to put together better metrics that I think will more precisely illustrate the nature of the challenge, but I think this does give you a bit of a sense of what it is that we're facing.

I said that the time has never been better to talk about this, but frankly, the need has never been greater. On top of a hot economy, on top of demographics, let's overlay a third, again, unprecedented factor, and that is globalization.

We all know, I believe, that we are witnessing seismic shifts in our economy globally. There are implications to that. First of all, some of the industries that perhaps had a home for decades, generations, maybe more than a hundred years in British Columbia have no guarantee that they'll be here ten, 15 years from now. That speaks to a need for us to have a training system that has the capacity to flexibly, nimbly and responsibly re-skill perhaps thousands, tens of thousands of B.C. workers in fairly short order.

Another implication of globalization, of course, is increased competition from other countries — not just increased competition for investment and jobs but increased competition for people. We have a history in this province and in this country where people have been lined up at the door wanting to come in. Well, that lineup is getting smaller and smaller, and the reason is that our competitors in the global economy are plucking them from the line to go to their country.

We have to become a destination of choice for people, and part of that is to have a system that enables them to come to Canada and get into the workforce in a smooth, seamless and quick way. One of the pathways is through our training system.

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There's an opportunity here. In a global economy the jurisdiction that has the competitive edge is the one that has a reputation for a training capacity and one that can say to investors: "Come to British Columbia. We have an educated and flexible workforce that we can train up in a customized fashion for your industry in a fairly short period of time."

What I'm proposing to you here — and it's certainly an operating assumption at the Industry Training Authority — is that we have the potential, through training, to develop a competitive advantage in a global economy that will be a defining characteristic in the years to come.

We know that B.C. and Canada need to move to a quality-based, value-added, innovative economy that's going to drive our future. We know that key to that is training. I mean, if we're going to have fewer workers, those that are going to be here need to be more productive and adaptable. Lifelong learning is going to have to be more than a cliché. Training is going to need to provide those bridges and ladders I was talking about earlier between skills and between occupations.

What we're talking about here and what we see as our mission at the ITA are long-term structural changes to how we deliver training in British Columbia. The ITA was created to be the agent of that change — not always a popular position to be in, as you politicians are well aware.

Let's take a look at a brief history of the ITA. I can say "brief" without fear of being contradicted, because we're only now approaching our fourth birthday. Back in 2004 we were mandated to be a Crown corporation, and the mandate you can read there: to govern and advance B.C.'s training system primarily in direction from industry.

I want to emphasize the word "industry." That is the key word in the mandate and what distinguishes the Industry Training Authority from what has gone before. It is the cornerstone of the ITA's approach to industry training, and that is the engagement and the leadership of industry. Those are the folks who make the decisions about risking capital and about providing jobs.

The reality is that industry challenges like this are best met through industry solutions. Employers do the hiring. They know how many people they need and what skills are required to be productive in today's workplace. Without employers to offer placement and on-the-job training to apprentices, there would be no work-based training — full stop.

With that as the foundation, a vision was created for a training system that was bold and, we believe, sweeping. Let's focus on outcomes, not on inputs. Those outcomes, those results, are actual jobs. Those are people employed as journeypersons in the province of British Columbia. Let's make that the target, and let's measure that as opposed to the previous, I think, fixation, which was what we were putting in at the front end of the machine.

Let's also be innovative. Let's experiment — responsibly, of course. Let's not dilute standards, but let's look at new delivery models. Let's be flexible — things like modular training, competency-based training perhaps as an alternative to the traditional time-based training. What about multiple entry and exit points for learners?

Above all, on behalf of the economy and for the workers, let's maximize worker mobility. That doesn't mean just geographic mobility. That means mobility, as I said earlier, within various professions and trades so that they can be very agile and have maximum utility for their own careers and to the economy throughout the course of their career.

The ITA's direction, as well, is reinforced and updated every year in a letter from the stakeholder, which is the government of British Columbia. It's fair to say

that when you take a look at those, those are pretty great expectations.

I believe, by the way, that the committee now has copies of the most recent shareholder letter of expectation. It was distributed to you, I believe, with your packages. If not, it's posted on the ITA website for all to see and for all to hold us to account as to how we live up to those expectations.

As I mentioned, it has been not quite four years since the ITA began its journey down the road to achieving those expectations. No one anticipated that those expectations would be achieved overnight. Really, phase 1 was a startup phase. We believe we have emerged from phase 1. But really, what was job 1 in phase 1? First of all, it was to start from scratch and establish the infrastructure for a new training system with new imperatives.

When I say "start from scratch," again I'm not kidding about how our CEO's first day in the office was working out of the backseat of his car. Some of the folks here can remember even more luxurious office appointments in the early days as well. Beyond that, things like policies, things like standards, things like contracts.... Absolutely everything you can imagine that has to be established had to be established.

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Another important mandate was to stabilize the system. Industry training in British Columbia had come through a pretty tumultuous period. There was a need to build bridges. There was also a need to catch up on much of the programming that, frankly, had lain fallow.

We had some programs that were ten or 15 years old, and it's hard to convince an apprentice or an employer to send someone into a training program with materials and equipment and curriculum and standards that are more than a decade old. We needed to stabilize the system and start to update that material, and that had to be done expeditiously.

Thirdly, and this is again coming back to the importance of this theme, is that we needed to facilitate industry leadership. So those were the three main tasks in phase 1.

Then the next question is: well, how did you do in phase 1? Really, it's my intention to go through this section fairly quickly. It's not because we're not proud of our achievements to date, but they are all spelled out in the annual report — you have it; you've read it — but also because, frankly, achievements are yesterday's news. They're in the rearview-mirror, and we're focused on that road ahead.

We're much more focused and would like the focus of this presentation to be along the lines of: what does phase 2 have in store? How are we going to get there? What are the obstacles and the challenges and the opportunities that are on that road?

I'm going to get to that in a moment, but let's just take a couple of minutes to look back. Let's assess where we are and where we've been through the prism of our '07-08 service plan and the service plan priorities. It lays out six goals with strategies, targets and measurements. If I do go through this too quickly, we can always come back in the discussion to follow up on your particular areas of interest or concern.

In goal 1, the translation there is to increase the number of apprentices and the number of employers who are prepared to hire apprentices and sponsor them, with a particular focus on increased aboriginal participation. Boy, could that not be more timely, given the StatsCan data that came out, I think, yesterday.

In the comparison between 1996 and 2006, the aboriginal population in British Columbia has increased 39 percent. That's fourfold greater than the non-aboriginal population. And it's a young population; 46 percent of those are under the age of 25.

I see that as a tremendous opportunity for British Columbia. I see that as a tremendous opportunity for industry training in British Columbia, and that is going to be the focus of a concerted effort by the ITA now, as it is, and certainly in the years to come.

Our other strategy was to expand youth participation and to track the progression into apprenticeship. The research there that, I guess, knocked it into our heads was that many of these young people — the young people you see on your screen there — are making fundamental decisions about their careers in grade 10. Well, we should be talking to them at grade 10 because certainly they were not being exposed in the high schools to the benefits of a career in the trades as much as the benefits of an academic stream or an academic pathway to a career.

How did we do? These are our results to date, as of December 31, '07. These are, I guess, more updated than what you have in your package because we just got them yesterday. But you can see that the number of registered apprentices since we began is up 158 percent. We're now nosing in on 38,000, and we're not done yet.

We are now putting together an information technology system with certain assumptions, and one of those assumptions is that we should be able to handle, I believe, in the range of 55,000 or 65,000 apprentices. We're continuing to see those increases.

Fortunately, the numbers of sponsors who are offering apprenticeship placements are also stepping up. They are indicating, through their stepping up, their faith in industry training and their view that it has great utility as a training model and as a supplier of labour for them. We're up 52 percent there since we began. This is a number that I think gives all of us a great deal of satisfaction, because this is truly opening young people's eyes and changing lives. The number of youth in training through our ACE-IT and SSA programs is up 435 percent.

Finally, credentials awarded. When we began on April 1, '04, the yearly total was 2,378. So far this year we're up to 3,551. That's an increase of 49 percent. That's where we want to get to — get those credentials awarded and get those journeypersons who have finished their training and who can go out and train the apprentices of tomorrow because they now are journeypersons.

Goal 2 relates to the infrastructure for industry leadership. ITOs, industry training organizations, are the central mechanism through which industry in B.C. is assuming a training leadership role and building an industry-led, market-driven system.

[1330]

Why industry? The ITA is looking to industry with some fairly high expectations and responsibilities. We're looking to industry to define current training needs and to come forward, be proactive, with proposals for improvements or new programs that will meet their ever-changing training needs.

These ITOs are responsible for developing and managing designated industry training programs within a recognized economic centre. Our strategies there have been to accelerate the rollout of those ITOs and to ensure that their business plans are in alignment with the performance targets that are in our service plan.

So what are the results there? You can see we now have six ITOs, covering 88 percent of apprentices being trained in British Columbia. They represent the commercial-industrial construction sector, residential construction, resource industries, horticulture, tourism and automotive. We are currently in discussion with two more — and those would be the transportation sector and the aerospace sector — which have expressed their interest in moving toward an ITO.

This year, incidentally, of these six existing.... As they continue to mature and develop, we anticipate several of them moving into what we call full-service-delivery stage.

Goal 3 talks about.... When we say "expand training accessibility and flexibility through innovative alternative technical training models," what that really means is an alternative to the traditional way of industry training. That is: you work on the jobsite, and then you're off the jobsite, in a classroom, for anywhere from eight to ten weeks. It's called block release.

Certainly, in a hot economy apprentices are kind of reluctant to be leaving the jobsite. Employers are kind of reluctant to let them go. I believe our customer is telling us something. They're saying: "We need to see some alternatives to block release — be it distance learning; e-learning; learning on the weekends, in the evenings, on the jobsite." So that is an important goal.

Here you can see some of the strategies that we are developing. Those alternative delivery models I just described. Trade routes — our mobile training initiative that has been getting rave reviews in the north of our province. As well, we are very cognisant that training, if it's accessible, has to be close to home. We need to look at how we're going to be expanding regional availability. Some of the colleges throughout the province do a tremendous job with satellite campuses. Okanagan College, for example, has a mobile trainer, a welding trainer, that they move out. They'll unpack it. It'll be there for maybe four months, and then they pack it up and move it to the next community. That's taking training close to home, and that's providing greater access.

Here you can see our mobile trainer. We've got demonstration projects underway. We're now doing a pilot project. We'll be evaluating that at the end of this year and providing a template for, possibly, other mobile trainers — not necessarily ITA-sponsored trainers, perhaps, but some mobile trainers. The private sector may want to follow this route, and post-secondary institutions may want to as well.

We have developed an e-learning strategy in consultation with stakeholders led, actually, by Vancouver Community College. We are now in the processes of developing — and soon to approve — a business plan. You will see some real strides taken on the e-learning side of the equation in the next year or so. We've already done that preparatory work.

Some competency-based pilots. What I mean by that is that these are programs where it doesn't matter, necessarily, that you've been in the program for four years. It's not time-based; it's competency-based. At the end of six months, and if you were supposed to be having eight months and the equivalent number of hours, if you can be assessed to show that you are capable of challenging that exam, then you can challenge that exam. This is in a pilot stage where we're modelling this. We'll be doing this with the crane sector. We're now doing this with the welding sector and the industrial electrician. This, again, is another example of alternative delivery.

Finally, we have a number of programs that are available in terms of weekends and evenings and distance delivery — things like electrician, cook, collision repair, recreational vehicle technician and so on. That's what we mean by alternate delivery.

Our fourth goal. This is a very significant goal, and that's because it's all about the money. Of every taxpayer dollar spent by the ITA, 88 cents is invested in training program delivery. It is paramount that we ensure and demonstrate that that money is being spent effectively, that training spaces are being utilized efficiently and that access to training is not impeded by long wait-lists.

[1335]

So how are we going about doing that? We've been making great strides, we believe, in our relationship with the training providers. How can we work together as partners to achieve greater accountability? How can we work together to minimize those wait times? How do we increase the availability of training seats and improve utilization? Finally, let's start measuring the actual ROI, the return on training dollars invested.

In the past year we have negotiated a new funding framework with the 16 colleges and university colleges and polytechnical institutes which deliver industry training in this province. Accountability focuses on efficient capacity utilization. We now have, for each college and for the system, utilization targets, and there are financial incentives and penalties attached to those targets.

This year the colleges, for the first time, came together to develop systemwide training plans as opposed to 16 individual plans, which is what had been the case in the past. They didn't really talk to each other all that much, so you're going to have some overlap. You're going to have some duplication. You may have some overcapacity. We've seen the initial training plans, and we're very pleased by the outcome of that collaborative exercise.

We want to congratulate our partners in the public training sector for this initiative. They've really moved from a space where they were viewing each other as competitors to their viewing each other as collaborators in a system. I can't tell you how big a leap that is.

Now, wait-lists do remain a concern, as we will discuss in a moment. But working with the colleges and with government funding for an additional 7,000 apprenticeship seats, we are making progress in reducing those lists.

Finally, this cost-per-participant-trained measure: what is it? It's developed by taking the ITA's total costs — our total cost, not just our cost for training — and dividing them by the number of training seats that were actually filled. We are committed to continuing to drive this cost down in coming years through greater efficiency, even as we add new training programs and even as we branch out into areas that are not currently in our mandate, such as assessment methodologies and supply-side initiatives. Those numbers are in the service plan and will be in our '08-09 service plan.

Goal 5, and there's only one more after this one, folks: ensure high-quality program standards and high levels of client satisfaction with ITA services. It really has two subsets. The first is the updating of program standards and curriculum and working with industry. At the same time that the ITA is facilitating the creation of ITOs, we are also working with industry to update existing program standards and to develop new programs. The industry leadership of those initiatives is critical to ensure that programs are actually aligned to today's workplace needs.

This is an important measure for us, because it ensures that apprentices are being trained to the highest, most current industry standards. We accomplish this work by engaging subject matter experts who are from industry. There you see 22 programs updated to established standards and an additional 18 on the go this year, and 70 percent of apprentices are now in updated programs. We are working towards having 92 percent of apprentices in updated programs by the end of the 2008 fiscal, and 98 percent just in time for the Olympics in 2010.

Many of these new programs that are on the screen here — I won't read through them — were proposed by industry sectors that didn't traditionally have formal training for apprenticeship programs — the homebuilding sector, for example. It's made up of a lot of small employers, and it is still building a training culture in this industry. It is beginning to establish one now, thanks to the development of programs, at the industry's behest, like residential framing technician, residential building maintenance workers and building envelope technician.

The second component of the fifth goal relates to service standards and customer satisfaction. Service level standards were developed last fiscal year to measure our turnaround times for the most common of our customer service transactions: apprentice registration; assessment of previous training and experience; apprentice certification; and provision, of course, of exam results.

We've also added a measure of time to answer phone inquiries. It's been remarkable. I tell you, I get so inspired by our folks at customer service, the job they do every day. Despite significant increases in volume,

they have met or have exceeded all of their targets, and they are able to answer all telephone calls within two minutes. It's service like that that is leading to our consistently high customer service ratings from apprentices and sponsors alike. Kudos to the folks at our customer service shop.

[1340]

Our final goal is to ensure high levels of stakeholder awareness and intent to participate by our target groups. We want our stakeholders to have the knowledge and the understanding they need to make informed decisions. We're asking them to assume some responsibility in their industry training plan, and they need information. We evaluate the effectiveness of this awareness with an annual stakeholder survey that is similar to the customer satisfaction survey.

Given the priority that we as an organization are placing on the development of strong stakeholder relationships and the importance of that to the operation of the industry training system, we're moving this year from measuring simple awareness to one of stakeholder engagement. Our goal is to understand what our stakeholders and what our customers expect from their relationships with the ITA — where we're doing well and where we can do better. We believe that that information is going to be extremely helpful for us.

The final goal of our service plan relates to the awareness of the ITA in industry training and the intent by our target markets to participate in industry training. I love this figure — that first bullet.

We take this survey every year. The year before, 2005-2006, we asked grades 10-to-12 students: would you think about pursuing a trades qualification after high school? And 19.5 percent said they would — not bad. But a year later that number was up to 22 percent — even better.

We see those numbers continuing to increase, as we believe we've turned a corner with young people. It's no longer regarded by the kids as a second-rate job. We're now having to work on their parents, who still need some convincing, a little bit, but we'll get there.

We've introduced a Skilled Life campaign and a Skilled Life website designed specifically for young people and a Top in Trades Award that celebrates heroes in industry training and provides role models for our young people. We are achieving, again, pretty high stakeholder awareness results. Our index score in '06-07 was 80, and we're looking to improve that for '07-08.

How are we going to get there? Where are we going next? Well, we're going to be directed to a great extent by our governance structure. I'd like you to take a look at that governance structure right now, because it's fairly significant. It provides high-level strategic guidance — how the mission and visions can be translated into specific goals and measures, specific targets, and how the values of the ITA can be promoted through the operations of the authority.

This is a non-stakeholder board. These folks were selected by the government for their complementary skills and their experience. The board conducts an annual focused strategic planning exercise every fall,

which has a significant impact on the selection of goals and priorities in the annual service plan.

We're also going to be directed by our staff. We are a small organization that focuses its efforts on high-level matters, which include policy development, program approval and funding allocation.

Some folks on our board like to refer to the ITA — not Frank — as lean and mean. I prefer, for the record, compact and efficient. We are an executive and administrative staff of 23 — again, focused on the core functions of governance, policy development and systemwide coordination.

We're organized, as you can see, along functional lines. For those of you who can't see it, they are product development; industry relations — that's with the ITOs and other industry; finance and administration; aboriginal apprenticeship, which is our supply-side initiatives; policy and research — very important; and communications and marketing. You saw that that ties in very much to our goals and our service plan — as does customer service, of course, to ensure that we can continue to provide the high level of customer service that our customers are now expecting, don't you know.

We are, by the way, currently conducting a review of that organizational structure to ensure that the alignment is one that will most effectively deliver on our '08-09 service plan.

How are we going to get there? Well, we're also going to get there because we're going to be guided by our values. I won't elaborate too much on them, but they are values that we take seriously and refer back to rigorously. Quality. Skills development opportunity.

Accountability. I want to underline that one because I think it relates to the mandate of this committee and the whole service plan process — our annual report, the fact that we post our service plan updates monthly on the Web, available for all to see. We're told that that is above and beyond what most Crown corporations are doing.

Collaborative relationships are extremely important. We're very serious about that. But what do we mean by that? How are we going to do business? We're talking about enterprise partnership. It's an approach to doing business.

[1345]

We talk about the industry training systems. What does that system look like? What does the enterprise look like? Well, at the very middle are the customers. Our customers are our apprentices and the employers. But in that enterprise, in that system, is a myriad of other bodies. This list is not all-inclusive by any means. It's meant to be there for illustrative purposes, and all of them are feeding in and supporting apprentices and employers.

For the enterprise to work most efficiently, they cannot be working in silos. They cannot be working in isolation. They need to be working with each other. The ITA has a legislated facilitative role to bring those players together and to have them operating as a system.

I want to tell you, it's a really interesting dynamic because included in that is that some of these folks are going to have to talk to each other and have con-

versations that they haven't had before, in a way they haven't had before. There's nothing like that storm on the horizon to suddenly focus your attention and say: "You know, some of the agendas that we had in years gone by maybe aren't that important. Maybe looking ahead, there are pluses for us to be working together in ways we haven't been before."

I've got to tell you that as the CEO of this organization, that is the single most gratifying element of this job to me — to see the way that people are coming together to this point to deal with this challenge which is affecting all of us, regardless of our politics or our agendas.

The final and very important figure in the enterprise partnership, of course — again, to emphasize — is industry. Through the ITOs, they are establishing leadership. They're setting a tone. Of course, our board is listening very, very closely to the voice of industry as it develops policy for the ITA.

Phase 2. We believe we're in phase 2. Where are we going? Well, we have, unbeknownst to many people, a dual mandate at the ITA. It's kind of hard to see. I hope that maybe in your binders you can see it better. But on the left-hand side of this graphic is what we've been doing to date, and that's to encourage participation in formal apprentice, formal industry training. The boxes that are enclosed are where we're working now with the existing sectors, the traditional sectors. We're introducing new programs, and we're updating and reorganizing existing programs.

Also in there, we have an opportunity with new sectors — I was referring to them earlier — who see attraction in that formal apprenticeship model and new programs that we haven't been looking at before. But that's one side of our mandate, and it's fairly well developed. We're on the way.

On the right hand is a side of our mandate that is less well known but no less important, and that is the other pathway to credentialing — to answering industry's demand for skilled labour. That is recognizing and credentialing folks who have existing skills — skills that were perhaps acquired in Canada. We're doing that right now through credential recognition. They can challenge, and they can write, a multiple-choice written exam. If they pass it, then they are credentialed.

We still have to work, though, on alternatives to written exams, and that's the dotted box. Are there other assessment tools that we can bring in that might open the door to people who are perfectly competent, perfectly capable, but unable to pass or are not comfortable with a written exam format?

The other area, on the far right of this graphic... It's very much top of mind, I know, as we increasingly look at the need for immigration to be assisting us on our labour supply needs. What about those folks who have acquired their skills outside of Canada? What can we do to get them involved in industry training — involved in industry — more quickly?

What about their foreign credentials? Are there ways that we can recognize them? Not sacrificing standards, but are there ways that we can recognize them more readily than we do right now? Are there other

informal assessment tools that we can use to assess their acquired or on-the-job skills?

That is going to be a major focus of our work in the year ahead, and we believe there are some very exciting innovations that are going to come from this project. We believe that British Columbia has the capacity to lead the way in Canada on this. Frankly, despite the fact that everyone is talking about immigration, not a lot of provinces are actually acting on it. So we believe British Columbia has an opportunity to make a contribution right across the country.

What we're talking about is that assessment. If the board passed a policy, there are multiple pathways to this common standard that has really opened up a door for us.

Another priority for us that I mentioned earlier is going to be e-learning. Watch our business plan and watch what's going to be happening in the next six to 12 months.

I've already alluded to broadening industry scope beyond some of the traditional trades to some of the more 21st-century industries.

[1350]

We need to focus on completion rates. This is a national phenomenon. It's not just a B.C. issue. We are running at about 39 percent completion, which means six years after an apprentice has begun their training, they have not yet completed their training.

It's a very aggressive cohort. Not every province has a cohort that is that aggressive. That's one of the difficulties. We all have differing methodologies, so we can't compare apples to apples to various provinces. But we are studying this closely, and it is a priority. We're not satisfied with 39 percent.

Then, on what we call the labour supply side, is the underrepresentation. Boy, we have huge opportunities here, not just to address labour supply needs, but to bring some folks who have perhaps been on the fringes of our society and out of our workforce for far too long into the mainstream. I'm speaking again about the aboriginal population, those with physical disabilities, those who are recent immigrants, and women.

Finally, what are some of the challenges? What are some of the opportunities that we see ahead? Well, we are going to have more folks going into that system. We've got to make sure that we've got the right capacity in the system. To do that, we've got to make sure that we're utilizing it efficiently. We'll be doing a lot of work in the months ahead with the training providers — both public and private — on that.

The ITOs. Our success is absolutely tied to the success of the ITOs. We are working in full partnership with them to accelerate their process to full service, and not only to get to full service, but to have a model that is sustainable. We want those ITOs to fly.

Apprenticeship wait-lists. I alluded to that earlier. We're making progress on apprenticeship wait-lists, thanks primarily to the Premier's commitment last year to provide 7,000 additional apprenticeship seats by the year 2010. That is helping a lot, but more work needs to be done.

We need to develop some apprenticeship registration protocols so that we avoid the problem of one guy on four different lists being counted four different times, which we've had. So there is some work to be done there.

I've alluded again to the demands for programs outside our traditional scope, but that is going to be both an opportunity and a challenge, given our existing resources.

Labour mobility was one of the first mandates for the ITA. Key to that is the Red Seal. We are working as a leader at the national table to ensure that the Red Seal program is responsive to industry and that more programs come under the Red Seal banner so that a British Columbian can work in Newfoundland, in Saskatchewan, with that same ticket and vice versa.

Better labour market information is important, because quite frankly, right now we don't have the data that we as a system and, I daresay, as a province require to make the kinds of forecast decisions that we need to make. Some sectors do. The construction sector does, because of great work by the Construction Sector Council. But most sectors don't. It's a bit of a shot in the dark.

It's kind of like being in a ship in an iceberg field, and you're trying to navigate through it without any sonar or radar. It is a critical priority, and we are heartened by work and some indications that we may be on the cusp of getting our sonar and radar in place in pretty short order.

We have to ensure and sustain industry engagement. We cannot take that for granted in an industry-led system. That requires an awful lot of work, and it also requires communicating to industry what it means to step up to the plate. I always believe in that old saying: "If you're going to get something out of it, you've got to put something into it."

There's not a free ride for industry. Industry has got to get engaged — not only at the governance level, not only at the subject matter expert level. They're going to have to get involved at some point with resources. They're going to have to have some skin in the game. Our job is to promote that, to facilitate that.

Finally, we need to focus again on increased public awareness. As you as politicians know, for change to occur there needs to be an appropriate political environment. We don't believe that the public truly yet understands what it is that's on the horizon that's coming at us and the potential it has to change the way we live, the potential it has to limit our prosperity and growth and our children's opportunities in British Columbia.

We don't believe that they are, perhaps, sufficiently aware to engage in a discussion about some of the tough choices we're going to have to make in British Columbia with respect to issues like immigration, like the apportionment of resources in our post-secondary system.

In closing, I want to talk about that, because I don't imagine there is a CEO from a Crown corporation that has ever appeared before this standing committee that hasn't been asked the question, "Well, can you use more resources," that has said: "No, I don't need more resources."

[1355]



Look. We have the resources we have. We've had increasing resources from the government, steadily, for the last three years. We will make do with these additional pressures with the resources we have. But I think a very legitimate question to be asked of all of us is: do we have the right mix in our investment portfolio for post-secondary education in British Columbia?

We spend, I believe, somewhere around \$2.4 billion on post-secondary training in British Columbia all in — approximate — and \$100 million of that is for industry training. Some \$100 million of that is for a model of training that industry is saying increasingly is meeting our needs and the needs of the global economy in the 21st century — \$100 million which, by my math, is less than 5 percent of all the money we are spending on post-secondary education in British Columbia. I merely put the question forward: do we have the right balance in our investment portfolio there?

In closing, it is not hyperbole to say that we are talking about the economic challenge of our time. Do you know that in the past in British Columbia...? Any economist will tell you that two keys to growth and prosperity are people and capital. In British Columbia's history, we've seldom had problems with people. Capital sometimes.

Now we're in a situation where we're almost turning it on its head. There's capital. We know that projects want to go ahead and are being held back. There's investment being held back because we don't have the people. Unless we get this people question correct, British Columbia's potential is not going to be realized.

It is going to require a mobilization of resources such that we see in a natural disaster or perhaps even in times of war, where you put all hands on deck. You've got to count every one of your resources and your assets, and you've got to utilize them all to the max — a very, very tall order.

You know, I do see a silver lining — that silver lining I alluded to earlier. When people see what's coming at us, they understand the severity of the challenge. They realize that this is happening on our watch. They look at what their agendas are. They look at, perhaps, what's been dividing some of us in the past. Those are rear-view issues.

More and more people are focused on future issues. They are coming together, and they are starting to cooperate in different ways. That is extremely gratifying, and it is extremely promising. I believe there lies the greatest potential of the Industry Training Authority in British Columbia.

Thank you very much for your time and your attention. We very much look forward to your questions, Mr. Chair.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Thank you very much, Kevin. That was very informative and certainly a very interesting review. At this time I've got lots of questions. We'll open up the floor for questions.

**C. Puchmayr:** Thank you for your presentation. I know you haven't been there since the beginning, but I will make some comments and ask some questions.

One of the things that I find really concerns me in British Columbia right now is the increase in young worker fatalities on the job — record numbers last year.

I'm also very concerned about your new training model, where the education components are no longer mandatory. The information I have received both from apprentices and from people who are trying to teach apprentices is that there is a real instability. There is not an understanding of how many classroom seats to hold, because the people are out in the field. When it comes time to come in to do their components, the employer is usually asking the employee to stick around and work longer. Your comments are that it's good for the employer and good for the employee.

The information I have is that it's pressure put especially on young people to stay on the job. Apprentices, especially in the first couple of years, don't make a lot of money. They really would like to continue on with that classroom component. Every one of those classroom components has a component on health and safety. I'm very concerned about the change that was made.

You talk a lot about the industry solution — that the industry should be driving it. Granted, the industries are providing the jobs. But the industry also has an obligation to their stakeholders and their shareholders, and that's to provide, to build and to do something as cheaply and as quickly as possible.

[1400]

So my question on that is: where do you have more formal input from not just the apprentices but people that have been in the field a long time? Labour unions, for instance, have had an impeccable record at training apprentices to take over the jobs that are required for the future. I don't see a very big input anymore with the labour organizations, and that certainly concerns me. That is a knowledge base that seems to be not as welcome to your table as they were in the past.

The other is that I look at the overall program of the.... I think that we have seen a decline in the quality of apprentices. You come up with some figures, and one of the figures that you come up with is the 49-percent increase on apprentices. The numbers coming in now....

At one time, after six months of people walking away from their training, the counsellor would make sure that that person was taken off the list. Those people stay on the list now. You talked about people being counted four times on the list. That didn't happen before.

Now because of the process that you've put in place, you have an ability....

**I. Black:** Chair, is there a question in here somewhere?

**C. Puchmayr:** Excuse me. We listened for an hour. We only have another hour, and there are some real concerns here with what's happening.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Chuck, please continue.

**C. Puchmayr:** One of the concerns I have is the endorsements. In February '07 you changed a policy

where.... I'm not quite familiar with what the policy is, but you're granting certain credentials to people, so your figures have increased drastically in the total completions year-to-date. But if you subtract the changes in policy, we've actually seen a reduction in completions. That's alarming to me.

A lot of the difficulty that we have is trying to gather up all the numbers and really see what are the true numbers and what are numbers that could be inflated by virtue of different policies and that aren't really giving us, at the end of the day, a quality Red Seal apprentice that's going to be out there to teach the next apprentice.

I'll end on one note, and then I'll get back into the speaking order to allow my colleagues to ask some questions.

I met with the chef industry, the cooking industry. Under these challenging rules that you have now, where you challenge these exams, a chef can actually work for his entire TQ time in a fast-food industry and challenge the exam and get a certification as a chef. That's not going to help us in British Columbia to have that person available to train a next chef in British Columbia, especially with 2010 coming up and heading into a tourism type of environment.

I'm very concerned with the direction that you've gone. I saw the New Zealand model, which was attempted in New Zealand, and all it did was create a decrease in the value of wages people were paid.

When it takes seven years to get a three- or four-year apprenticeship completed, the employee, the apprentice, can't demand the journeyperson rate because they're still going to school. So I think we're actually heading backwards.

I'd be interested to hear some of your comments on the specific issues that I brought forward with you, and I have more questions as well.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Kevin, before you answer that question, just for the benefit of all members, if we could stick to a protocol of maybe asking one question and allowing for an opportunity to respond so that there can be some interaction back and forth.

That was rather lengthy, and there were one or more questions that were in there, which we'll have to pull out. So if I could just ask for that, it would be much appreciated.

**C. Puchmayr:** Mr. Chair, just on a point of order. This sort of began to happen last year. We come to these. We read all the information. Then you have a presentation that really takes the lion's share of the time we need to ask questions of the witnesses out of the equation. Then it's over, and we don't have the questions answered. So maybe we need to sit down with LAMC and figure out a better way of having these processes go on.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** I appreciate that, and I think that having an hour or less for the presentation and at least an hour for questions, as long as there's not too much dialogue thrown in to the preamble of a question,

would allow them plenty of time to be able to answer questions.

But I will turn the floor over to Kevin.

**K. Evans:** Thank you, Chuck, for your questions. I'm not sure which of the six questions you'd like me to answer.

**C. Puchmayr:** It wasn't six. There were three specific ones that I would like answered.

**K. Evans:** Okay. Well, let's begin with where we have full agreement, and that is that the key to a high-wage economy is a high-skilled economy. We do not see that we're moving backwards in terms of wages in this economy right now. I defy you to show me where that's occurring, because people cannot find workers with the skills, and they are being hired at a premium.

[1405]

I also agree with you that the labour movement... I spoke earlier about utilizing all of our assets and resources. The labour movement — particularly when it comes to health and safety, particularly when it comes to high standards of training — has a very valiant history and one that we are benefiting from. We fund, as you may know, a number of joint training boards. They are union, and they are management. They are providing some of the very best training that we have in the province.

In terms of input, we have labour representation on some of our subject-matter-expert panels in terms of the programs and the standards, because they know those programs and standards. One of our ITOs is undergoing a scoping exercise, CITO, to determine what full service will look like. There is labour representation on the board.

We have left it with the ITOs. They, not some central agency, are in a position to determine whether labour should be represented on the governance structure of the ITOs. We now have two that have labour representation at that table: four labour representatives, I believe, on the resource training organization and one on the tourism as well.

My view, frankly, is that there needs to be a period of building trust and of demonstrating value on both sides. So far, that's starting to happen. I wouldn't be surprised that the doors are opening more and the tables are becoming much more welcomed than they have been in the past number of years.

If I may address the question that you raise with respect to the counsellors and apprentices — and completion rates, I think, is what you were really getting at — there is no evidence, but I'd welcome it if you have evidence that demonstrates that having counsellors has an impact on completion rates. We've run the numbers. We've compared the joint training schools completion rates, where there are counsellors of a kind, with the non-training schools, and there is virtually no difference in completion rates.

The fact of the matter is that completion rates are a national issue, where some provinces have counsellors and others don't. There are a myriad of factors that are contributing to the completion rates.

It could be something like essential skills, Chuck. It could be things like the block release. It could be things like the current state of the economy, which you alluded to earlier. That is perhaps an inhibitor for people coming out of a job. My point is that our first obligation is to understand....

Also, as you'll see in your annual report, it's not across the board. It's sector-specific. Some industries, like carpentry, have more problems with completion rates than others. We need to understand what the factors are, and then we need to develop a strategy. Unfortunately, it's too simplistic to say that a lack of counsellors is responsible for completion rates being 39 percent in British Columbia.

If I may, on the point you made about people being on a wait-list or on our registration forever, we do have a business rule that if we have had no contact from an apprentice — any activity in terms of hours reported, or anything — that apprentice is taken off and is delisted after 18 months.

**S. Steward:** Yes.

**C. Puchmayr:** How many?

**K. Evans:** Eighteen months.

**C. Puchmayr:** It used to be six.

**S. Steward:** There was a lot of dispute in terms of how the numbers were calculated prior to the ITA coming into existence. We took a look, and we were very uncomfortable with the actual number of apprentices that were being counted as active.

We went through those numbers. We went through the systems. We developed a clear set of business rules to define how we were going to count how many apprentices were active. There are four or five criteria, and every 18 months we apply those criteria. It is only the people who are actively training who are counted as active apprentices.

**K. Evans:** And if I may, the quick question.... Geoff, would you care to respond to that?

**G. Stevens:** I think the cook program, in fact.... Led by the ITO for the tourism sector, go2 is actually currently reviewing the entire structure of the cook program with broad consultation with industry, with a view to looking at a way of making the program more responsive to what is seen as growing specialization in the industry. They'll be bringing forward to us recommendations for how we can effectively improve that program, improve the number of completions and certifications.

They're cognizant of 2010 coming. There are huge shortages of people with cooking qualifications and skills in the economy. As I say, in the next couple of months we're anticipating that the industry, having completed this review, will be bringing forward proposals to us to review that.

The other comment I'd like to quickly add on is around the challenge process. We have not changed the mechanism or policy or process by which individuals can challenge industry qualifications. We adhere to, effectively, the same protocol that's standard across the country — that is, time-and-a-half, documented work experience in the trade in order to qualify to write the Red Seal exam. We basically have adhered to that, and it hasn't changed in any respect since we became operational in 2004.

**G. Gentner (Deputy Chair):** Briefly, we saw the slide showing the new world of globalization, and on the first page of the stakeholders' update it acknowledges very prominently the bilateral agreements of governments and that of TILMA and its impact. What I would like to know.... They're going to see this harmonization of labour standards with Alberta, including of which we'll see the trades qualification harmonization, the apprenticeship requirements, etc.

Very quickly to the point, there are a number of significant differences between the training and apprenticeship programs and qualification requirements between Alberta and British Columbia.

I'm wondering: does the ITA have a detailed assessment of the similarities and differences? Are you working with the government of Alberta? Do you have a list of these types of differences? And if you do not, how will the ITA determine the appropriate standards that will prevail in the harmonization process?

Quickly, on the Red Seal business, I believe that the standards in Alberta are higher than ours. So are we going to adjust our standards to theirs, or is Alberta going to lower their standards to ours?

**K. Evans:** Actually, Guy, it's none of the above. What happens in Alberta currently is that they have a dual qualification system, or have had. They have their own provincial qualification, and they also have the Red Seal. It's optional if you want to get the Red Seal.

As a result of the TILMA discussion, Alberta realized it's going to have to come up to our standard — which is the Red Seal standard, the national standard. They are now, we have learned, moving from a dual qualification system to a single qualification system, and that will be the Red Seal.

Collaboration and consultation with Alberta is on the increase. Certainly, we are in dialogue with them, but there's an argument to be made that this is a good thing in the interests of labour mobility and in the interests of British Columbia and Alberta workers. We're already moving in this direction with programs like the oil and gas rig technician program, which was developed to meet the needs of employers and employees working in both B.C. and Alberta.

To allay your concern, I hope, B.C. retains the ability to develop its own training programs. Collaboration is only required if the same program exists in both provinces.

To your question: are we compiling a list? Yes. Are we checking it twice? Yes. Have we completed it? No.

**G. Gentner (Deputy Chair):** When will the list be available publicly?

**K. Evans:** It's a work in progress, but I can certainly get back to you with an answer to what the target date is for that.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** John.

**J. Horgan:** I was subbing. Go ahead.

**J. Yap:** Thank you, Frank and Kevin, for your presentation. I just have a couple of comments and one or maybe two questions. I liked your starting comment about the work that you do and your reference to the mission that matters, because obviously this is very important for the future of our province.

In terms of one of the programs that you have, the youth program — a comment on that. I commend you on the work being done there and the collaboration with schools. I've seen in my community, in Richmond, high schools getting on board with trades programs. I have constituents who are sending their grade 11 children to learn building trades. It's terrific to provide that opportunity to our youth at that stage, so keep up that effort.

My first question is with regard to the.... In your closing comments you talked about: here's the approximate global amount of the budget that goes into advanced education and then the relatively modest amount for industry trades training. I think you said it was approximately 5 percent by your arithmetic.

[1415]

Have you had a chance to compare it to other jurisdictions to see if there's room for us to grow, you know, in terms of the direction that it should go? Do you have a sense, at this point, what it should be, given the challenges that we face in training our people for the coming tsunami of labour requirements?

**K. Evans:** John, thank you for the question. It's our intention to begin a discussion by asking the question. As part of that, we recognize that that discussion will be informed by us having benchmark information from other jurisdictions. We are in the process just now of gathering that information.

At this point, I cannot answer your question, but I hope to be able to be in a position to do so very shortly.

**J. Yap:** Okay.

You had a slide on, I think it was, your plan for the coming year to look at foreign credentials. At this point, I know that this is the plan — that you want to make this a priority. What areas in particular are you looking at? What skills are you looking at? Or do you have a list of skills that you want to target first to see if you can approve the credentialing for these foreign-trained workers?

**K. Evans:** Well, that's going to be determined by industry, and industry is telling us that they have shortages in areas like carpentry, plumbing, electrical — the ones you might expect. Certainly, we will be guided by that.

In the first instance.... We are in the process of actually seeking an industry partner as we pilot this assessment program, and it will likely be one of the construction trades. The potential.... I think there's a bit of a crossroads.

If you're going to do foreign-credential recognition, it basically involves a very extensive and expensive mapping process, where you take a look at your prime source countries and say: "Okay. A carpenter in South Africa — how does that match to a carpenter in B.C.?" You're going to have a huge grid which takes an awful lot of time and so on, and it's constantly changing. That's one approach.

Another approach that might be more productive is when they come here: "Show us what you can do. Show us what you know." Let's develop some sophisticated assessment tools that will let their performance speak for themselves — assessment tools that will enable us to identify where there may be gaps in your training so that we can then customize a training program that will get you into a position where you can contribute to the workforce sooner.

Right now it is an all-or-nothing game. Right now you come into this province, and your option is to challenge the exam, if you can be assessed to be eligible. You're writing an English, multiple-choice, written exam.

I'm telling you: the pass rate for those writing that from offshore is, not surprisingly, not very high. Surely we can do a better job for these individuals and for the economy while maintaining the very high standards that we have in British Columbia. That is our goal.

**J. Yap:** And this is in your plan for the coming year?

**K. Evans:** Yes. Well, we will piloting, and we hope to be doing this pilot on a national basis with our Red Seal partners, because to have some real impact, it should be with those high-volume trades like Red Seal.

**J. Horgan:** Thank you, Kevin, Frank and others, for the presentation. I'll follow up on John's questions about foreign accreditation, but it's interesting. I'd be much happier asking a plumber to show me what they can do rather than a heart surgeon. I think that there is scope within the trades and other training for fast-tracking accreditation, and I think it's that sort of thinking which will accelerate that.

One of the challenges that we have when we look at foreign accreditation is language and literacy training in English, predominantly, here in British Columbia. What work is being done by ITA with the training providers to mesh language challenges and literacy challenges with the training skills that we need to meet the growing economy?

**K. Evans:** Just to begin in response, I would say that is not a problem that is exclusive to folks coming

from offshore. We have some real essential-skills issues with people in Canada — not only literacy but numeracy, the ability to communicate. We are doing a great deal of work now on this area of essential skills.

To come back to Chuck's point, the difficulty with essential skills may be playing a very significant role in the low completion rates. These folks just don't have the essential skills required to do the kind of work and the calculations that are required. This is an area that is of importance domestically and internationally.

[1420]

On the language side of things, we are working with, for example, the Roofing Contractors Association of B.C. They have a large cohort of Vietnamese. They have applied to us for a pilot project, which we are now currently considering. There will be a crew of five, and one member of the crew speaks Vietnamese and English and is an ESL instructor, not a roofer. By so doing, they are learning applied English in the environment of their workplace.

The organization SUCCESS is also talking to us about how we are going to crack this language nut, because it's a significant one.

This work we're doing on immigrants is really just beginning. It's in our '08-09 service plan, and we are very cognizant that we're going to have to focus an awful lot of our attention strategically on the very issue that you've raised. Again, I would emphasize that it's not simply a foreign-trained issue that we're looking at.

**J. Horgan:** Okay. Just a technical question on your performance measurement document, in your report, page 2 — percentage of female participants to be determined. That should be fairly simple. I could figure that out.

I'm wondering if that data is in someone's dossier over there. They can just pass it to me. Or can you explain to me why gender is a challenge for the statisticians?

**S. Steward:** It's a challenge because it hasn't been collected. It's also a voluntary indicator, and we haven't reported on it. So we're pulling it out now and adding it to our forms.

**J. Horgan:** Excellent. I'll let my spouse know that my gender is voluntary.

**R. Cantelon:** Once again, I'd like to congratulate you for your progress and thank you all — Kevin and the board and the members — for an outstanding presentation.

I think that one of the most encouraging aspects of your presentation.... I believe there are 4,600 people in the ACE IT and other youth-oriented programs. I take your point about the ITA being an industry training authority and not limited to trades, because certainly our young people are recognizing career opportunities in industry in a wide range of things that wouldn't previously be called trades. After all, at one time engineering was considered a trade, virtually.

The technical aspect of all these professions is growing. I think we'll see that more so as the environ-

mental technologists that this world will require will become more and more expert — far beyond a normal, say, high school level of tech knowledge and training. That certainly is embraced in our area too, and I'm sure parents will come around to that. I won't count myself.

My question to you is.... Again, a very interesting aspect is the fact that you have a new plan for training that is across 16 institutions. I know that previously we had a severe competition between training institutions for programs and training spots. Who took the lead in that? I'd like to hear more about how that evolved.

**K. Evans:** I have to give, as I said in my remarks, the training institutions in the province credit for coming together. Certainly, we conveyed to them that we look at the enterprise as an enterprise and as a system. When we are evaluating their training plans, we will be asking them questions like: "Have you talked to the college down the road?" and "How does your plan mesh with their plan?"

Frankly, they deserve the credit. They've done it. They've shown the initiative, and the taxpayers of British Columbia and the students of British Columbia are accruing the results.

**D. MacKay:** Thanks, Kevin. That was interesting.

I have to say that when I stopped and listened to.... The purpose of ITA, obviously, is to train people for the workforce. Goodness knows, with the economy like it is today, there are jobs out there looking for people — trained people.

The challenge that you have is not easy — training people. I have to think back to myself. One thing I've always wanted to do is be a carpenter. Christ, I can't cut a straight line with a ruler and a handsaw.

I've often thought about some of the trades that we're training people for today, and I look at carpentry as an example. I suppose that if I had gone into carpentry as an apprentice, on an apprentice program, and maybe it took me four years, I probably would have stayed there for the four years, because years ago, when the economy was not hot, there were no jobs out there. But today we've got this economy that is just on fire.

I think about carpentry — the fact that we've broken it down into modules. After you become a framer, you can go out there and get a job, and you can come back at your convenience. When the economy slows down — and we all know it's cyclical; we'll see a slowdown in the economy — I could then go back and pick up the other modules that I needed to complete my carpentry.

[1425]

I think you guys have done a great job on this. Hanging doors and windows. My God, have you ever tried to hang a door or window so that it closes evenly and quietly? It's a challenge.

These are all modules now that you can take at your leisure. I think what you're doing is great, because people can go out after having completed a module, get a job and come back at a later time.

My question.... I want to take you back to Northwest Community College right now. I'm having trou-

ble understanding how it is the ITA works with Northwest Community College.

The mining industry in our part of the province identified some shortcomings with trained people at ground level jobs in exploration. So Northwest Community College started a school of exploration and mining. It's a mobile training unit that goes out to the Indian reserves and trains the people on the reserves for six weeks. They live in tents, they live in camps, and they get all the training they need to fulfil the jobs that the mining industry needs and wants.

I'm just wondering: is that part of your role in ITA, to look after Northwest Community College school of exploration and mining? The money seems to be coming from Energy and Mines, as opposed to the ITA. Could you maybe just comment on that.

**K. Evans:** I don't believe that mining is an ITA-credentialed trade. So it would be outside of our purview. But I can assure you that we're working with Northwest Community College on a number of exciting projects related to our focus.

**D. MacKay:** That was a short answer to a long question. Thank you.

**I. Black:** I've learned a few things today. One is that my colleague Dennis MacKay will not be asked to help me with my home renovations.

First of all, let me add my voice of thanks for taking the time to spend with us today. Your presentation and your competency at the answers betray your claim that you're kind of new at this and wet behind the ears. I think you've got a marvellous command of the strategies, tactics and relationships that you're going to need to drive this thing to the next level, which we all as British Columbians, irrespective of our political stripe, need you to do.

My question revolves.... You touched on it, and I want to have you expand on it, if I may. With respect to the challenges that we've got.... It's a good problem to have, but we've got record employment in this province. The economists' view is full employment at 4 percent — when you're at that level of unemployment.

Within that context, one of the untapped resources that has been identified verbally, in months and years gone past, is our aboriginal community. You touched on the stats that came out of the feds yesterday with respect to that.

How are you going to crack that nut? Could you talk a little bit about the programs, the approach and the work with the aboriginal leaders and the aboriginal communities around the province? How are you going to tangibly take what is perhaps intuitively obvious when you throw it up on a PowerPoint presentation and turn that into action and results? That, I think, is absolutely paramount in your plans. Can you expand on that for a few minutes, please?

**K. Evans:** Sure. Thank you for the question, because it is one of our key strategic priorities. We have in the

past year hired a director of aboriginal apprenticeship to develop an aboriginal strategy for trades training in British Columbia.

We're extremely mindful, again, that this is dangerous territory. This is a path that has been trod by many, many before us, and not a lot has come out the other end — in terms of actual results, in terms of outcomes, in terms of aboriginals who are journeypersons.

As we looked down that pathway, we saw a lot of bodies off to the side of the road and a lot of money — millions and millions of dollars of money — and we looked at what came out the other end. So we're very cautious, and we're going to take, we believe, another route. We started walking down that pathway, and we saw ourselves getting caught in political interests and other agendas. There's an industry out there.

We've decided that we are going to back away, and we are going to be building on success. There are pockets of success in terms of aboriginal training in this province. Our strategy is to find out where they are, what they are doing, how they are doing it and how we can replicate that, perhaps, in other areas. Let's use our funding and leverage the funding of others to make those successes flourish.

We want to establish a culture of success in the aboriginal trades training business. Right now, frankly, there is an aura of impossibility hanging over aboriginal trades training in this province — and not only in B.C., but across this country — because there are very few success stories.

It is our intention to go slowly, go realistically, to understand that aboriginal people need to lead the way and that we need to be very, very respectful and cautious in our relationships with these stakeholders. They bring an awful lot to the table, and I think we're going to learn a lot about learning from our aboriginal learners that could have application to non-aboriginal learners.

[1430]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Thank you. Just to round off, I've got a couple of questions as well. I'll start with just one question and then let others carry on.

You mentioned that there are roughly 38,000 people currently involved in terms of the training process, and I think you said that the total organization had about 23 people.

**K. Evans:** There are 43 when you consider 23 in our head office, policy, and then another 20, roughly, in our other office doing customer service.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Right — so 43. What I'm wondering, in terms of organization.... Obviously, one of the goals in terms of Crown Corporations is to assess money and that money is being well spent. I'm just wondering what the comparison is of the previous organization to our current organization in terms of the number of people that are involved in it — as well as perhaps to other organizations across Canada that have the responsibility for training in terms of their overall management.

Quite frankly, the number of people that you have in the system today and your goals going forward — up to 60,000 or 65,000 — are pretty remarkable, compared to the people that you have in there. I think you've done a great job. I'm just wondering how we compare, though, in terms of previously and to other provinces.

**K. Evans:** I'm going to ask Jeff Nugent to come to the microphone in just a moment. He is our director of policy and research and recently saw some research from the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, which in the appendix actually had some of that information. He can give you a high level.

I think we need to understand that it's not apples to apples. There are different systems, and they have different ways of doing things.

Alberta, next door, has some 150-odd employees, I believe, but they do not have ITOs. Our model is that much of the day-to-day work in terms of program standards and so forth, upgrading of programs, will eventually be done by the ITOs. If that model works, we believe that we can maintain a relatively small function at the ITA.

The only caveat I have to that is that the world is changing, as we're seeing, very quickly. We are being asked to do more and more things that weren't in the initial mandate. Great. We need to do that if we're going to have a competitive labour force in British Columbia, but as that expands, that initial plan may need to be revisited in terms of our size.

Jeff, would you...?

**J. Nugent:** I don't actually have the details on the staffing complement of all the other jurisdictions. In terms of the predecessor organization to the ITA, from what I saw at the time the ITAC was decommissioned, there were between 90 and 110 staff. Again, it's a different service delivery model.

**C. Puchmayr:** I thank the member for Bulkley Valley-Stikine. For the first time in my three years in Victoria, I heard that our economy was cyclical. I'm pleased to hear that from the other side of the benches.

**D. MacKay:** It was terrible in the '90s.

**C. Puchmayr:** Oh yeah. It wasn't cyclical then — right? But it'll be cyclical next year.

A couple of quick things. I'll touch, at the end, on the one of the statistics that Jeff gave some comments on.

I'm pleased to hear that you're doing something with the cook program. I think it's really important that we fix that up and get it back to where it's a high level of accreditation.

I want to ask about a program that's available out there. You talk about youth apprentices and that we're identifying people in high school — grade 10, 11 and 12. It's great to convince people that they should be going to apprenticeships.

There's a program out there called Discovery to Apprenticeship. I think the UFCW is doing it. I'm very familiar with the program. One of the things I've noticed the program does is that it takes a group of youth and puts them into different components of apprenticeships for a six-month period and pays them six hours a day in wages to do it.

The statistic that comes out of that is that many of the youth who go into the program go in with the idea that "I want to be a plumber" or "I want to be a welder." Most of them come out of it saying: "That's the worst of all those trades. I would rather be something else." I'm wondering if there's such a program that you're looking at.

[1435]

I think it can save the industry a lot of money, and it'll certainly prevent youth from heading into the wrong direction in apprenticeships — give them more experience in the different components of apprenticeship. I'd want your answers on that.

Then the last thing. I just want to clarify the information you gave that really nothing has changed in reporting. In your document here, on credentials awarded, number 2 says: "Challengers credential count was amended in February 2007 to include credentials issued to challengers, including no exam and no inter-provincial standard endorsement and no exam with the interprovincial standard endorsement."

That is a significant change. I think that would reflect the increase of about 300 percent in challengers. I just want you to go on record to tell me I'm wrong, or clarify what your own document says here.

**K. Evans:** Sandy Steward will handle that one. She's our VP of customer service but is also responsible for youth programs and statistics, as it were.

**S. Steward:** The increase in the credential count was due to the fact that there were credentials that we were awarding to welders — people coming out of welding programs — that we didn't count before. We simply included them in the count, and that's why you saw the increase.

**C. Puchmayr:** So having not had that, we would actually have seen a decrease.

**S. Steward:** Yes.

**C. Puchmayr:** That's alarming. Okay. The other one?

**S. Steward:** On the youth program, it might be helpful just to give you the perspective of how we have structured our youth programs, which are structured at a number of different levels.

We started out by producing or developing the ACE IT program, which targets high school students at the grades 11-12 level. What we found in developing that program was that where it's most successful — and that's where we're seeing the biggest growth areas — is where schools are doing pre-work with kids.

Their work is actually starting at the 8-9-10 level, and they're putting kids through Discovery to Apprenticeship programs before they actually get into our program. They're well aware of the issues, and many of them have actually so-called made the decision to go into that trade before they even get to our programs.

We are also working on the awareness side at a much lower level, the grades 6-7-8 level, where we've developed a program that allows communities to offer the opportunity to explore a number of different trades and to have a tactile experience with their parents so that they understand what a journey person does on an everyday basis. If you're a carpenter, do you go out and hammer nails in a building, or are you in a skyscraper?

That program also goes into: "Okay, I like this. What do I have to do in my school path to get there?" We're expanding the gamut of the range that you need to move through.

**C. Puchmayr:** Can I just ask: in Discovery to Apprenticeship, do they actually go into the field and experience the apprenticeships? Or is it all...?

**S. Steward:** At the grades 6-7-8 level?

**C. Puchmayr:** People present or....

**S. Steward:** It depends.

**C. Puchmayr:** No, I'm talking about 11 and 12.

**S. Steward:** In grades 11 and 12? Yes, they do. Our one program is aimed at the kids getting their technical training. They do level 1 of their technical training, and that's generally classroom-based training.

The secondary school apprenticeship program, of course, is students working for employers. Instead of going to school, they do work in the field, basically. The ideal is where we encourage the kids to do both programs, so they're in class, and they're in the field.

**K. Evans:** I might add, just if Jeff wants to add on, the SSA program. We provide a scholarship — the people of British Columbia do — of \$1,000 to each of those who successfully complete that program. Last year we issued \$435,000 in scholarships — again, an indication of the enthusiasm and the commitment.

**S. Steward:** Not only that, it's an indication of those who've stayed in the trades, because those scholarships are not issued until six months after they have completed their high school program. They have to still be working in the trades six months after.

**G. Stevens:** I was just going to add, Chuck, that another program similar to what you've described was actually brought forward to us and designed by the B.C. Construction Association here in B.C.

It is a program called CORE, which is essentially a program where industry gets involved. They screen the entrants. They basically provide them, front end, with a

block of safety training and orientation to the industry. They put them out onto jobsites. It's non-trade-specific. They have an opportunity to have exposure to, primarily, ICI construction sites. Then the industry will pick up those individuals and take them on, ideally, as apprentices.

That was a model that we fund. We've approved it as a new foundation program. Specifically, it was brought forward by the industry itself, and they've had fairly good success with that too. So I think there is a range of similar kinds of initiatives underway.

[1440]

**C. Puchmayr:** So you're really not doing the program I talked about. Would you look at maybe doing something where people get a more diverse approach to different components of apprenticeships? You can get back to me on that.

**K. Evans:** Thank you for the question. I do believe that BCIT is still offering a "discovery to trades" or "here's the smorgasbord" kind of program for people who really want to....

**G. Stevens:** A number of institutions still offer those around the province, and we fund them.

**S. Steward:** We work closely in our youth programs with the Ministry of Education, which does have broad responsibility for the awareness component of that. So we have structured our partnership that way. We're very outcomes-oriented.

Our goal is to increase the number of youth participating in trades training. Therefore, that's where we've directed our programs. But we're working with the partners — the Ministry of Education as well as the individual schools — to do the awareness component of it because we realize it has to be done. In addition, we've got the incentive program at the lower levels.

**G. Gentner (Deputy Chair):** I was going to pose similar questions to Chuck's. I'll sort of move more into the simpler question, I suppose, having heard the argument that.... For example, on the modular side of things, I don't know if that's necessarily a success. The jury is still out. I think that was a political decision. You can be a framer hammering nails. It doesn't necessarily make you a carpenter.

When we talk about the cyclical nature, I have to suggest to you that the Red Seal certificate, in my understanding, is below what was being handed out in 1998 and 1999 when we didn't have a construction boom. In fact, we have roughly close to 200,000 people involved in construction. The completion rate of the apprenticeship, I believe, is low. I heard it was 40 percent.

Kevin, you mentioned that this seems to be not an anomaly for British Columbia but a similarity throughout Canada. I'm just going to ask a simple question. I want to know: why is it that the completion rates for apprenticeships are so low?



**K. Evans:** Well, it does vary from.... If you look at page 38 — maybe you're looking right now — of the annual report, you'll see that it is about.... I think it's 25 percent for a carpenter, ranging up to 77 percent for a millwright.

The areas where you see the lowest — which are carpenter, electrician, plumbers at over 50 percent — are the areas where there is the greatest need currently in the economy.

I don't want to start getting into the speculation and coming up with pet theories. That's what we're trying to get away from, with the research that we're doing. One could connect the dots, and it's supported anecdotally that they're busy out there. Some of them believe that I'm making \$80,000 or whatever the dollars are that would be equivalent to a journeyman now. Do I really need to go back and finish my level 4? Perhaps for my family's sake, I would be just as well served to stick around and carry on, because I'm getting employment. That is a challenge.

We believe that the system is geared to be producing journeymen. We need journeymen to be sustaining the system, to teach the next generation of apprentices. But I think there may be some truth to that theory. Not wanting to speculate on theory, I guess I just did anyway.

**G. Gentner (Deputy Chair):** Just a quick supplemental, if I may. What kind of incentives are there, therefore, to make sure that they do complete the apprenticeship programs?

**K. Evans:** Well, there is a provincial tax incentive, which is payable upon completion. There is also a federal tax incentive called the apprenticeship incentive grant, which is in play. We're now studying the impact of those taxes in terms of whether or not they are of sufficient quantum to actually affect behaviour.

**J. Horgan:** On the ITOs, the ITA is funding the ITOs. Is that correct?

**K. Evans:** Partially.

**J. Horgan:** Partially. The first part of the question would be: can you explain the funding formula and how long you see it in place? And the other issue is following up on Dennis's question in the mining sector. I look at the mobile unit and Enbridge's prominent.... I'm fairly certain they paid a couple of bucks to get on the side there. But I see Teck Cominco. You made a reference that the mining sector is....

**K. Evans:** Well, if I can just clarify that. I'll ask Geoff to answer your question. The mining sector also employs millwrights, carpenters, plumbers — many, many trades that are under the auspices of the ITA.

**J. Horgan:** I was unclear on your answer. It struck me as odd. That's a clarification, so back to the ITOs. What's the funding arrangement? How much is coming from industry? How much is coming from the taxpayer?

[1445]

**G. Stevens:** We have a fairly explicit policy around funding. We do provide a core funding element to the ITOs to assist them with their administration. It's important to point out that the amount of financial support we're providing is relatively small. I mean, they're certainly not building big infrastructures of staff. For the most part, these are organizations that maybe have anywhere from one to three core staff.

The way we structured the funding is that as they move toward maturity and take on greater responsibilities, the level of core funding that we'll provide will increase, and that's specified in a formula. I can tell you that it's proportional. The formula is based on the level of investment that we make in training in that particular sector, which the ITO covers.

For example, in the case of horticulture where we invest relatively little money, the amount of core funding we're currently providing to the ITO is \$200,000 a year. For the largest ITO, ICI construction, the level of core administrative funding is around \$700,000. Plus, we fund them to undertake, project by project, specific developmental responsibilities in terms of standards and that type of thing.

In terms of the industry contribution, primarily they're volunteer boards. We certainly expect the industry to.... We are certainly not paying their boards, and in some cases we have very, very senior people coming to the table and contributing their expertise and time. As they undertake standards work and things of that nature, we would expect subject matter experts and those types of individuals who get involved in the standards processes to also volunteer their time.

For the most part, industry's contribution at this point is in kind. That's where we're at, at this point. Some of the ITOs are actually looking at ways and means where that may change, where they may look at a mechanism where they could effectively generate other forms of revenues from other kinds of services, and we would leave that up to them. But the intent was clearly never to build large bureaucratic infrastructures in industry.

Our board has a general guideline around administration for the entire system of no more than 10 percent. If you put in the ITOs along with our own core ITA administration, you'd find that we are substantially under that at present.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** I'm just being very conscious of time here. I had a couple of quick questions, and I know that Chuck had one more quick one. We're going to try to get through these as quickly as possible.

With the indulgence of the committee, I'll ask my two questions that I have remaining. The first one is with regards to high school training and the programs that are in place. I know from the slide that the number of students involved has gone up by 435 percent.

I'm wondering about the demand side of that. Have you measured how much demand we have in the school system for a potential increase in the number of students involved in the process?

**S. Steward:** In terms of the number who want to participate...

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Yes.

**S. Steward:** ...or what the schools can supply?

We have about 45 to 47 out of 60 school districts in the province participating in the program. I think at a certain point — we may be at it now — there will be a levelling-out. In our discussions with teachers, there's only a certain percentage of the school population who are interested in these types of programs, and we may be approaching that now.

If we wanted to see a huge growth, there would be a whole host of other factors that would have to be considered, including facilities and capacity of training institutions.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** The reason why I'm asking that in particular is we have about 650,000 kids in the system. Doing the math, that's about 50,000 kids in any one grade. If it covers grade 11 and grade 12 students, that means you've got about 5 percent of the student population currently participating in an ITA program of one form or another.

That's what I'm wondering about — if this demand sees that increase from school districts or whether or not, like you say, there may be a levelling-off.

**S. Steward:** There is demand, but the demand is tempered by local school district choices. We're not necessarily a party to those local school district choices.

What we say is: "We're firm on how much we can afford. This is what our funding formula is. If you want to see it go greater than that, then you'll need to restructure within your own school district or find partners to do that."

It's a difficult conversation oftentimes, because they're looking to us to be the vehicle for growth.

**K. Evans:** The point being that it's not purely the student or parent demand. There are other factors at play. Are there champions within the school district or in the school who will push this forward? Again, where does this fit into the particular priorities of a specific school division?

[1450]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Okay. The last question I have.... Once again, cognizant of time here, but it's pretty important for my section of the landscape that I represent in terms of my riding, and that is forestry. With the downturn in forestry and the challenges that we'll be facing over the next year, there are a lot of workers now that are looking at opportunities to either retrain or to upgrade skills. I'm wondering about the flexibility within the ITA to be able to manage the kind of shift or change that we're seeing currently in forestry.

By all accounts, once we get through this, we're not talking about a whole bunch of people having to go off to a different type of job. The forest industry is cyclical.

We'll go through this and come back. But I'm just wondering how much flexibility you have within your organization that will respond to those kinds of downturns.

**K. Evans:** Well, as a matter of principle, one of our mandates — you saw at the beginning — is flexible, responsive training. If we're not flexible and responsive to respond to something like the pine beetle, then we're not fulfilling our mandate.

That said, we're not yet seeing the demand that you suggest might be coming. CNC, the College of New Caledonia, has its ear close to the ground there. It seems as though folks in the forest industry right now are working. They've got those trees to cut down, and they're not looking beyond maybe next season or the season after. I think that's an issue for not just the ITA but also regional governments and economic development in that region.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Just for a heads-up in some of the impact to communities, I know that CNC is now in the process of engaging some of the workers that look like they might have a lengthy layoff in terms of possible training opportunities, so I'm sure they'll be communicating with you down the road.

**K. Evans:** Well, we'll be in a position to respond.

**C. Puchmayr:** You talked about the Premier's commitment for 7,000 more training seats. I know if you build 5,000 more long-term care beds, you can fill them. But the concern that I'm hearing from the industry is that they don't know how many people are going to be filling those seats. Some of the colleges are putting instructors available, and they're having seats available. But with the new rules of not having to do your no-longer-mandated components, when people don't sign up for those, those moneys go to other initiatives in the college.

I think what one of the construction unions — carpenters, I believe it is — has done is purchased all of those seats and said: "We'll take them." Then they're beating the bushes to try to ensure that people are taking those components and updating it.

So it's not the same application. If you provide 7,000 seats and you have policy that may prevent people from understanding or from having a systematic filling of those seats, it's all for naught.

**K. Evans:** A couple of comments on that. We are working with the colleges to develop a systemwide wait-list management system, where there is a central registration system. You know, it's easier to book a golf course tee-off time on line in the lower mainland than it is as an apprentice to find where in the province I can go and get my technical training. Dumb.

The other aspect, frankly, is that I think there's a bit of urban mythology, Chuck, with respect, that counselors in the previous era were taking these trainees by the hand and signing them up. In fact, what we were

hearing from trainees is that they want to have some flexibility in when they're putting in their training.

That said, you're quite right that the current system is putting a very large risk burden on the colleges and on the IIA. We've got these seats available. We've got people who are on a waiting list, and when we actually call them the day of.... "Where are you?" "Oh, I'm not coming in."

So we're looking at a number of things. One is that some colleges actually say, again, to put some skin in the game. When you register, you're also putting some cash on the line. So you do have an incentive. There is a cost if you don't show up. There are other incentives that we need to look at perhaps at the front end, and we'll be discussing this with the college. Why don't we register you when you register as an apprentice? When is your first and second scheduled time for training as an option? That is not currently being done across the system.

Those are just a couple of ideas. The colleges have a whole bunch more. There are ways that we can get those people into the training system. We do have a cohort that has not yet received any technical training, and it's not small. When the economy turns down or when there is an increased demand, and these folks now want to get into that technical training, we're going to have a bulge that we're not going to be able to handle. So we are highly motivated to get those people into their technical training in terms of the sustainability of the system.

**C. Puchmayr:** Or they'll leave the industry. If the economy turns and there are no jobs for them, they might not even follow through on it.

[1455]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** Thank you for that question.

Kevin, I wanted to thank you very much for the thoroughness of your presentation and your answers.

Frank, Sandy and Geoff and the rest of the people that came, I want to thank you very much for presenting

to us. Clearly, you've got a monumental task in front of you in terms of meeting the needs of the province and of the employees. I'm confident, from the progress you've made to date, that things are on the right track.

**J. Rustad (Chair):** At this time I will take a quick one- or two-minute recess to clear, and then we will look for a motion to go in camera for discussion.

The committee recessed from 2:55 p.m. to 3:04 p.m.

[J. Rustad in the chair.]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** We are just coming back from a quick recess, and we will now be going into talking about the analysis of the Industry Training Authority. I will be looking for a motion to move in camera.

The committee continued in camera from 3:05 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.

[J. Rustad in the chair.]

**J. Rustad (Chair):** We are moved out of camera.

I just want to conclude here by thanking the members for the meeting here, for coming down and going through this process. The Crown that we heard today was one that hasn't been heard from in its past before, so this was the first time. I think it was valuable to be able to hear that message.

For the interest of members and anyone who is listening, our next meeting will be on February 6 from ten till noon in the Douglas Fir Room in Victoria.

With that, I just want to say publicly, since this is the first opportunity, a happy new year to everyone. I hope they had a good holiday, and I look forward to the process here going forward, working.

I'm looking for a motion to adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 3:21 p.m.



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