

new geographical locations. These shifts, in combination with the perception that older workers are a poor investment for adjustment and retraining initiatives, they argued, stack the odds against the older worker. Studies of displaced automotive and steel workers, showing high levels of permanent job loss combined with wage falls among those finding new employment, were mentioned as illustrating broader trends. The witnesses also noted current developments in the Toronto garment industry, where older full-time workers are being displaced by younger workers paid on a piece-work basis, many of them recent immigrants for whom language and other limitations combine to make them receptive to low wage levels and poor working conditions. The overall conclusion offered by the Council's representatives was:

It appears that even during periods of economic health and expansion, market forces tend to squander our most important natural resource — the abilities and skills of the most experienced members of our work force.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, given the mandate of their departments, officials of Labour Canada and Employment and Immigration Canada focussed primary attention on these and other problems of labour market competitiveness.

Officials of the latter department outlined a range of program initiatives, under the Canadian Jobs Strategy.¹⁸ Older worker participation rates in these programs would not be expected to reflect overall proportions of the unemployed consisting of older workers. It is nevertheless useful, in reviewing jobs program older worker participation rates, to recall that in 1987, an average of 18.7% of the unemployed were aged 45 or over.¹⁹

The Skill Investment program assists employers in retraining (with a view to subsequently retaining) workers whose jobs are threatened by technological change. In fiscal 1986-1987, 16% of all participants were aged 45 or more — a proportion which, according to officials, continues to prevail. The Skill Shortages program assists employers in training current or new employees in skills which are in short supply. In 1986-1987, 3.9% of participants in this program were older workers. The Job Development program combines training and subsidized jobs to assist the long-term unemployed. In 1986-87, 8.3% of participants in this initiative were aged 45 or more, and it is estimated this proportion prevails in 1987-88. The Job Entry program is targeted to assist youths and older workers (primarily women who have been occupied in homemaking) with entry to the labour force, and in 1986-87 served a clientele 8.1% of which was aged over 45. The Community Futures program assists communities facing economic decline and chronic unemployment. In 1986-87 the older worker participation rate