

HANSARD

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STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Thursday, June 10, 2004

Committee Room 1

Sackville Support Group for Parents of Acting Out Youth

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COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Ms. Marilyn More (Chairman)

Mr. Mark Parent

Mr. William Langille

Mr. Gary Hines

Mr. Jerry Pye

Mr. Gordon Gosse

Mr. Russell MacKinnon

Mr. Stephen McNeil

Mr. Leo Glavine

[Mr. Gordon Gosse was replaced by Mr. David Wilson (Sackville-Cobequid).]

In Attendance:

Ms. Mora Stevens

Legislative Committee Coordinator

WITNESSES

Ms. X, Mother of Former Wood Street Centre Campus Patient



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2004

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Marilyn More

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I now call to order the Standing Committee on Community Services. As you know, today we have with us Ms. X. Ms. X is the mother of the first child who went through the secure care facility, the Wood Street Centre in Truro. She has asked to share her family's story with the committee in hopes that we might learn something that could benefit both her family and many other families who are caught in similar situations.

So I just want to preface the meeting with a couple of cautions. We will refer to Ms. X and her son by their first names, but those names will be taken out of the Hansard record. I do want to remind the media that in no way, either through image or by name, should Ms. X or her son be identifiable in any reports of this meeting. Is that understood? Thank you.

So, Ms. X, we are going to give you 10 or 15 minutes to tell your story as briefly as you can, and then we will go around a couple of times and we will have questions and we can bring out other points and more detail. There will be time for you at the end of the meeting to also address us if there is anything more you would like to add or something you forgot to mention earlier in the meeting. As I reminded you earlier, we are fairly informal here. If you have a question, just ask us, take time or a break to get your coffee or whatever and just relax, and we thank you very much for coming today.

MS. X: Should I discuss over the period of time up to now?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Sure. Why don't you give us just a little bit of background so we can understand perhaps the state your son was in when he did enter the Wood Street Centre.

MS. X: My son was . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, Mr. Pye just reminded me we should introduce ourselves so you know who you are talking to, so perhaps we will start.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The other people around the room are either researchers from the various caucuses or media people, and I believe we have someone from the Department of Community Services sitting in.

MS. X: When my son was approximately 12, his behaviour became unmanageable so we got in contact with Community Services at that time, when we couldn't manage in the home with his behaviour. From there he went into numerous placements over Nova Scotia and his behaviour deteriorated. He was incarcerated, I'm pretty sure twice, once at Waterville and once at Shelburne, and continued on with more placements. We were working up to Wood Street opening and looking quite forward to Wood Street opening because it was a secure treatment centre where he would be off the street and safe.

So in the time leading up, he did complete the program at the Adolescent Centre for Treatment within the IWK. It was approximately nine months that he was at that facility, and he returned home for a short period of time, went back into care and stayed in more group homes. Then we got the word that Wood Street was opening - I am pretty sure it was December 9th - and Community Services made application to Wood Street, got accepted, my son did, and he went there on December 9th. He was granted a 30-day certificate, which took him up to January 9th.

During that stay he wasn't stable. We had a case conference approximately two weeks before he was ready to be released. At that conference, the IWK were present, Community Services from Lower Sackville were present and ourselves. We were saying that my son wasn't stable and he shouldn't be released because there was no appropriate place to release and transition him into, so Wood Street at that time stated that they couldn't provide any more services to my son.

He left Wood Street on January 9th and went to the crisis centre in Dartmouth - the Reigh Allen Centre. That was his first visit, he went back again for a second visit and he was granted a 30-day stay once again. When two weeks passed he got another certificate and he stayed for another two weeks because there was a care plan in place to go to the ACT program once again at the IWK.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Let me be straight. After he left Wood Street, then he stayed at Reigh Allen and they kept extending his stay there?

MS. X: Right, until his behaviour escalated and it was unmanageable. He was running the streets and getting in trouble and there was another application made to go back to Wood

Street. That was the second time he went back to Wood Street. From Wood Street he went to the ACT program again at the IWK, which is, under the Mental Health Act, it's voluntary so he had to agree to be there and accept treatment. That was the problem with my son because he didn't want to agree to stay there.

So, he was released from there and there was nothing the psychiatrist could do to keep him there so he went back into care again through Community Services and they again made application to Wood Street and he's at Wood Street now until the 26th of this month. But they don't keep children any longer, normally, than 30 days. They did keep my son a little bit longer the second time because there was a plan in place where he was going to the IWK. He will be released, we have a case conference June 16th at Wood Street and we'll ask that they extend it, but as a rule they don't normally extend the stay.

He was very unstable when he left Wood Street the first time, very unstable. It's just frustrating because we don't have a place to transition children into after they leave Wood Street. They're taken from a very structured facility and he went to a crisis centre in Dartmouth and there's no step down for children to go after Wood Street. As a parent, that's really frustrating because where do we go from Wood Street?

I followed it probably from 1999 up until opening and always the words used were, secure treatment, opening. There is no treatment at Wood Street because you can't give treatment in a 30-day period. In their pamphlet - I looked it over again last night - there are no doctors that come in, no psychiatrist that comes into the facility to see these children. The consistency with staff is part of the treatment, they need to work on long-term or short-term behaviour programs to deal with the behaviours. A lot of that's not being fulfilled.

It's really frustrating as a parent because our hopes were very high when Wood Street was opening. It's just not, I guess, what we thought it would be.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The first time that your son was released from Wood Street, were you and your husband part of that decision making or were you consulted? What did they tell you as to the timing? Why did they release him then instead of keeping him on? I understood, you know, that they could stay for up to 90 days at that treatment centre - sorry, at the secure care facility?

MS. X: That's correct, we were present, they had a case conference at their centre itself and, yes, like I said, the IWK were present. They really felt that my son was not stabilized to even leave the facility. We felt the same. There was a lot of violent behaviour and right up until he was being discharged, that weekend, very violent and they said at that time they could not offer him any more services and it is up to Wood Street to go back to the court to get another certificate. It's not something that we can take part in. We can just ask that he not be released.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Did they give you any more information as to why they decided to release him beyond saying they didn't have any more services for him?

[9:15 a.m.]

MS. X: They felt as a team that they had nothing else to offer my son at that time.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there anything else you would like to add before we start a few questions?

MS. X: No.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So far I have Dave Wilson, Dave.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Thank you, Ms. X, for coming in. It has been awhile, a long journey definitely on your side - and after I was elected and learning about your case and having meetings with you - it has been quite frustrating for you and on my side also. So I just want to ask a few questions around the times between when he was in the Wood Street Centre - I understand now he's in there - and on the 26th, when I believe you said his 30 days are up?

MS. X: Correct.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): I guess we'll go back to the start when he was the first placement in Wood Street. What was your understanding that the centre was going to do for you or your family? Leading up to it, I know you were involved and really researching what the centre meant to you and your family. So what did you feel initially the centre was going to represent and how was it going to help you?

MS. X: I felt it was going to give us secure care along with the treatment up to 90 days. I don't know if my expectations were high, but that's what we felt. I have read all the articles that were written on it and talked to a lot of people and I expected some treatment within the facility and for a stay up to 90 days.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So do you feel since his placement, and now his third placement, that he has been getting the proper treatment that you think your son needs, or other children in the same situation maybe that you're in, do you feel he's getting that treatment there?

MS. X: No, I do not.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): After he left the first time he was placed there, he went to Reigh Allen after that?

MS. X: Yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Or was it the ACT program?

MS. X: No, the Reigh Allen Centre.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): At the Reigh Allen Centre, was he receiving any kind of treatment there or any kind of care there to try to overcome some of the problems he has had over the years?

MS. X: Well, Reigh Allen is a crisis centre and they do have groups which he attended, but it's a pretty open facility.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So did he have free rein when it came to leaving at night, was he out on the streets?

MS. X: Yes. They would call the police, their protocol would be to call the police and report, but he could come and go as he pleased.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So leading up to his last placement, I understand he was at the IWK facility which was a voluntary situation and that he could actually check himself out if he wanted to. After he did so, how did you learn that he wasn't in that facility anymore?

MS. X: The last program?

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): At the IWK, yes.

MS. X: The staff called me and said that my son wanted to speak with the psychiatrist on call. They made that phone call and it was approximately 10:00 p.m., I was in the process of calling Community Services to ask what we can do from here because once the doctor sees my son then they will release him, and in the meantime while I was speaking on the phone with them, they just walked him downstairs and let him out.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): What time of day was that again?

MS. X: That was at approximately 10:30 p.m.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So from that point on where was your son after he left there? Were you there to pick him up, or was there someone else there to pick him up?

MS. X: No. There was nobody.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid) Where did he reside for the next week?

MS. X: He stayed at a church on Brunswick Street, for homeless men. He stayed under a place down by Perks on Lower Water Street, and slept out on the street.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid) So he was out on the street?

MS. X: Right.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid) Was there any concern? Did you have any concerns about his health care or his safety during this time?

MS. X: Yes, I did.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid) Okay. How long did it take - I know you contacted me to see what we could do to help out, because from my understanding he was on the streets, with the danger put upon him from the people he was hanging around, I know you were quite concerned - how long did it take before Community Services were able to pick him up?

MS. X: We put out Locate to Detain Orders, and that would be because my son wouldn't call, or he'd call but we wouldn't know where he was calling from. It was approximately five days.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Five days.

MS. X: Yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): After he was located and apprehended, where did he go from there?

MS. X: He went into care through Community Services, and he went to a hotel placement because there was no other placement. They made application to the Wood Street facility but it was taking some time for them to accept the application.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So, he pretty much ended up in a hotel with guards on the door for him, but this is after about a week of him being pretty much homeless and on the streets?

MS. X: Right.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): That was around May 26th when he went to Wood Street? Is that roughly when he went there?

MS. X: Yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So what kind of treatment is he getting right now? How is he now? Do you feel on June 26th that he'll be in any better situation, or any better environment if he leaves Wood Street?

MS. X: No, I do not.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So do you feel that the province or Community Services have done as much as they can for your son, or do you think that there's nothing more we can do and this is how it's going to be, we're going to be chasing him around the streets and trying to pick him up and hopefully keep him out of harm's way with alcohol, drugs and who knows what else?

MS. X: No, we need to do more.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): What do you feel we need to do here in Nova Scotia? I know that you've researched support groups over the years. I know you are quite versed in what kind of treatment he needs. What does he need right now?

MS. X: He needs long-term treatment. The Wood Street facility is a great facility, but some children may be fine after 30 days and some children may need to stay the 90 days and get some treatment involved. He needs long-term treatment in a secure setting. We have Wood Street, but we need another component. We need a place for children to transition into after Wood Street, if Wood Street isn't going to provide treatment, then we need treatment after Wood Street.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Initially when the centre was opened, I remember we were hoping that we could get your son in there. Did you think that it was a treatment centre, that he would get some form of treatment there, or did you know it was more or less a secure centre for him to kind of keep him safe?

MS. X: No, I did not. I really believed that there was treatment, and in their brochure that came from their open house, it lists treatment three or four times.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): That was the initial brochure you had seen before they opened?

MS. X: That's right.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): What about now?

MS. X: I haven't received one of the new brochures, but I did question the word "treatment" and where was the treatment, and the facility manager said that maybe that shouldn't have been worded that way in the brochure.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): The caseworkers that you've been working with in Sackville, what are their feelings about what's going on? Are they supportive about getting your son into the treatment centre - or the secure centre, sorry, I still use that word treatment and I understand it's more a secure centre which I know is important, especially in your son's case. So the staff or the caseworkers you've been involved with, what have they been saying over the last six or eight months?

MS. X: I think we all agree, they agree that my son needs to be in a secure setting with treatment.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And where do you see him getting that right now? I understand over the years, you know, Nova Scotia has sent some of its youth out of the province and out of the country. Is that something that they've come up to you about?

MS. X: There has been some talk about it, just because there are no services of that nature in Nova Scotia.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And was it your understanding with the new secure centre that that would stop, or that would limit the placements of our youth out of the province with this new centre?

MS. X: It was my understanding once the Wood Street facility opened in Truro, we would be bringing some children back to Nova Scotia from out of province.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): To your knowledge, do you know if any kids came back there?

MS. X: Not to my knowledge.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Pye.

MR. JERRY PYE: Ms. X, you know, I reflect upon the problem that you have with your child and I do remember back in 1998 when I first got elected to the provincial government and became the Critic for Community Services and then through to 1999 when there was a whole host of questions around secure treatment for children who have severe emotional and behavioural problems.

As a matter of fact, there was a meeting out in Sackville, and I forget the location in Sackville, but I do know that it was, I believe, in the Fall of 1998, or the Spring of 1999, and

there were approximately 12 parents who came together with the very real issues that you bring forward to us on the standing committee around behavioural problems and the need for a secure treatment centre in Nova Scotia so the children wouldn't be going out of province. We heard from people who have had their children in the States, in British Columbia and Ontario, who were sent to those provinces and to those treatment centres so that they could have contact with their children during special times of the year, preferably around Easter and Christmas. Out there at that time there was an organization formed called KIN - Kids in Need. I don't know if that organization is still going, but it was an organization that was brought about as a result of families who had children in this need for special care. Is KIN still operating in Sackville?

MS. X: No, it is not.

MR. PYE: So it is a disbanded organization. That organization was organized to help families so that the families could at least have some way of getting together and knowing what the needs were and how to access those needs for children with behavioural problems at that time. I've heard of children where their parents could no longer conduct disciplinary measures at home and their children were taken out by police and put into hotels and locked up, and even locked up in prison, the Sackville prison sometimes as well.

The bottom line is that you're absolutely right, the Wood Street Centre that was built in Truro was, in fact, supposed to be a secure treatment centre. It was supposed to address those needs and to prevent some 25 children who were out of the province and the future children from ever having to leave. Obviously, the Wood Street Centre has not met your need and when they go in, I would like to know, what happens when you first enter your child through the door of the Wood Street Centre, what kind of an assessment is done, and when the assessment is completed and when the child's 30-day time is up, what are the recommendations, where does the child go then?

You said the child went to the Reigh Allen Centre after that, which is a crisis centre, and it allows the children to come in on a daily basis; they're supposed to be there in the evening. They provide some teaching. They have classrooms and education for the children there, but some of the children, it just doesn't fit their needs and they're left out on the street as well. Has there been recommendation with respect to out-of-province treatment for your child as well? Has there been an assessment and recommendation by the Reigh Allen Centre, when they can't meet your need, to have your child sent out of province to a secure treatment centre that will provide their needs? Obviously there's an awful lot of people who are disillusioned with respect to what they expect of what was supposed to be the new secure treatment centre in Truro. Could I ask you to comment on some of those questions that I brought forward?

MS. X: We do expect some treatment at Wood Street, and to go from Wood Street to a crisis centre is not appropriate. We need to have some treatment in Wood Street. It's just not here. We will have to look at out-of-province placement as we go, because my son can become

very violent. He has been very violent in our home and our community, and in placements that he's been in through Community Services, more unstructured, like Reigh Allen, he can just come and go. There's not a whole lot of structure to keep him there and give him treatment. Wood Street would be the answer, but I think they need to evaluate the way their system is run and how long they're keeping some children and how long they may need to keep some children, past the 30 days, and provide more treatment. That definitely needs to be changed, because we could never bring children home from out of province to the services we have right now.

[9:30 a.m.]

MR. PYE: You have two other children who live at home.

MS. X: Yes.

MR. PYE: It must be an extremely difficult process when you bring him back into that environment. It's probably one which you and your family cannot handle. Have you asked the Wood Street Centre or the Department of Community Services to recommend an out-of-province treatment centre for your child, or has anyone within the department or anyone who's responsible for doing assessments recommended that your child should be one of those children who needs long-term secure treatment, and that the only facilities available are out of province?

MS. X: Yes. There has been, actually, an application made to an out-of-province placement, but nothing is confirmed yet. We don't know where we go from my son's discharge from Wood Street.

MR. PYE: What do you mean you don't know where you go?

MS. X: Well, where do we put a child who is still not stable enough to go into a group home setting?

MR. PYE: If, in Nova Scotia, there are no facilities available, and if the psychologist at the IWK - and there must have been an assessment at the Reigh Allen Centre as well. If, in fact, those assessments along with the assessment at the Wood Street Centre came forward and the recommendation is there that there are no available facilities to treat your child with the severe behavioural problem that he has, then I don't understand why there is a wait. If he's recommended for an out-of-province treatment, why is there a wait?

MS. X: Because it's a process. It would be a process to make application to out of province . . .

MR. PYE: Oh, okay. So, has an application been made?

MS. X: To one place in Ottawa, yes.

MR. PYE: So it's in the Province of Ontario.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Stephen.

MR. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you very much for coming in. I'm sure it's extremely difficult to come into a room of strangers and tell your family's story, so thank you. When your son was at the IWK, I know it was a voluntary placement, was he receiving treatment?

MS. X: Yes.

MR. MCNEIL: Did you notice a difference?

MS. X: Yes.

MR. MCNEIL: When your son went to Wood Street, was that treatment continued, was there a bridging between what was happening for him at the IWK and what was taking place at Wood Street?

MS. X: Yes, because when he left Wood Street and went to the ACT program, it continued. They have a very intense treatment program at the ACT program. His first day, his nine-month stay when he first went to ACT, there were a lot of gains and he had great success, but then he was discharged from there. We go to open facilities to Reigh Allen or Bridges, different group home settings, and from Wood Street, to go into the ACT program, it would be continued, but they have their own treatment program at the ACT program, which is very successful and very structured.

MR. MCNEIL: So what was happening with your son during the 30 days at Wood Street?

MS. X: At Wood Street, in respect to treatment?

MR. MCNEIL: Yes.

MS. X: To my knowledge it would just be groups.

MR. MCNEIL: As you described Wood Street, it begs the question, what's the difference between Wood Street and the Nova Scotia Youth Centre?

MS. X: Right.

MR. MCNEIL: Do you notice a difference?

MS. X: I'm not really familiar with - to me it's an intervention at Wood Street.

MR. MCNEIL: If your son is not receiving that treatment and there isn't a continuation of treatment that has been working, you're really just putting him into a secure facility.

MS. X: Correct.

MR. MCNEIL: This secure facility is in Truro as opposed to the one in the Valley.

MS. X: Right.

MR. MCNEIL: Has there been any indication from the province - knowing the pitfalls that you've seen - that they will be moving forward and trying to put in place the facility that we all had hoped for in Truro and providing the treatment in the future?

MS. X: Out of province?

MR. MCNEIL: No. Has there been any indication that they would be putting in place the treatment facility in Truro that we all envisioned, which started in 1999 - the vision started then and . . .

MS. X: No. I spoke with the facility manager on two occasions - just had some questions, and she said they were a new facility, and that's when I questioned the pamphlet that I had, and my concerns with the treatment. Her response was it really shouldn't have been worded that way, because it is just secure care.

MR. MCNEIL: When you say out of province, where would they be going in Canada? Where is the closest secure treatment facility in Canada?

MS. X: The closest, I'm not sure of that answer, but right now there has been an application made to a facility in Ottawa.

MR. MCNEIL: Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Gary.

MR. GARY HINES: Thank you for coming in and sharing. I know it must be difficult for you. You can certainly add to helping to fix the process and what's wrong. I would like you to take me through, perhaps if you can in your son's words, what a day at the centre would consist of. If there's no treatment taking place, it appears to me as though he's incarcerated. Is there more to it than just incarceration? Also, has he had medical treatment, as well as psychiatric treatment, through the years in different facilities?

MS. X: He has had all the assessments done through the IWK, within the IWK, and he has a psychiatrist he sees outside of Wood Street; the psychiatrist isn't involved in the Wood Street facility. He has all his assessments completed, yes, and they've been passed along, but they should be updated as the years go by.

My answer, to my son's day at Wood Street, would be pretty lax. He wakes up in the morning approximately 9:00 to 9:30, if he chooses to. He does some sports. In the afternoon, approximately from 1:00 until 2:00 or 2:30, he attends a classroom setting with a teacher, if he chooses to. He can refuse to go. In the afternoon they have groups, social skills and whatnot. They have supper and then they have a period in the courtyard for outdoor activity, and they watch movies in the evening. He goes to bed around 10:00 p.m.

There is a nurse - sorry, the nurse resigned from Wood Street - there is a VON who comes in and gives their meds to the youth. To my knowledge there is no psychiatrist within Wood Street. I've asked numerous times, with his meds, and I went to a psychiatrist here in Halifax, got his prescriptions and sent them up on the Acadian Lines bus to the facility. To my knowledge there is no psychiatrist who does any assessments at Wood Street for children. Once my son needed medical assistance and I know they took him in the van out to the local hospital to get it looked at. So I know there's no doctor that visits Wood Street because my question was, if the doctor could visit Wood Street and write the prescriptions and review the meds, that would be great, but that does not happen. I send the prescriptions myself.

MR. HINES: Do you feel that there's a need, and obviously there is, a need for more interaction between you, the mother, or the parent and the Wood Street facility and your son, so that there's an interaction between the three bodies? Do you feel left out of the process at that point?

MS. X: I do - this stay. The first stay, we were very involved as parents. I called Wood Street twice daily and got updates, once in the morning and once in the evening the first stay, and got updates on his behaviour all day, and then behaviours at night. Faithfully every day I called. The second stay, I wasn't able to speak with floor staff. I had to go through the supervisor or the social worker, which was fine, I did that daily. This stay, they have not contacted me once.

MR. HINES: Is your son angry with being in the Wood Street facility, because of the fact that he has to remain there, or does he hope that something will come out of it that can help him from his difficulties?

MS. X: Actually, my son, in my opinion, is quite comfortable at Wood Street. From his point of view, he can test lots of limits. He has a few problems - settling at night is a really rough area - and my son, to me, they went out and they bought the children \$300 Game Boy toys to play with and settle at night instead of consequenceing the behaviour immediately.

When he was at the Reigh Allen Centre he was actually asking to go back to Wood Street. He said, Wood Street's a lot funner than being held accountable on certain behaviours in our community. So he, on a couple of different occasions would ask to go back to Wood Street, and when I would say why would you want to go back to Wood Street, and he would say - the last time, the last five days leading up to his discharge, because he knows from approximately five days prior to him leaving, that they brought McDonald's into him each morning, and my son had a field day with that because he was able to manipulate the situation and knows certain staff up there aren't as consistent as others. I find a lot of the staff that have experience and have dealt with children in settings are very consistent with my son, others aren't consistent and, in my opinion, some feel they're intimidated by his behaviours.

[9:45 a.m.]

MR. HINES: So what brings on his anger? Do you feel that perhaps within Wood Street where he feels comfortable, perhaps secure, is there less opportunity or less occurrence of his anger outbursts and so on? What brings them on?

MS. X: With my son, to be quite honest, I don't know what brings it on but it can happen very quickly. It can escalate out of control, but they have seen a lot of behaviours in Wood Street. He escalates quite often there. They will sometimes escort him to the time-away room if staff feel a fear for their safety or my son's safety, they will escort him to the time-away room. The first stay - one day we were there for a case conference and we were in the hallway outside of the unit, and he had come up with two staff and myself and Community Services from Sackville and the social worker from Wood Street. He was totally out of control out in the hallway - it's an open area - and he was out there with staff and he was totally out of control. He came into the meeting and then left and it escalated, being very violent. We sat in that room - it lasted for approximately 20 minutes - he was allowed to be out in that hallway, being very violent, very disruptive and out of control, basically - banging on the door. They allowed that to happen for 20 minutes while we were in that case conference room.

At one point, I said, how long are you going to let him stay out there and be out of control like that? I said, he should be immediately escorted to the time-away room. She said they use that as a last resort. It was approximately 20 minutes that he was totally out of control. The social worker from Wood Street wouldn't even leave her seat.

MR. HINES: Do they use medication to control his violence, his behaviour?

MS. X: No. He is on medication, which I've monitored very closely over the years and they don't change medication at Wood Street because they have no doctor. When he went to Wood Street, he just followed through with his prescription that he's already on.

MR. HINES: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: If the committee members don't mind, I think I'll ask my questions from the Chair's seat. Ms. X, I just want to say, we are getting a sense of sort of the untold human drama behind the story, although admittedly the focus today is on the Wood Street centre. I have to say I have met with you previously and I've heard your full story and I was moved to tears by the deterioration in your son's situation and the frustration and the lengths to which you and your family have gone to try and get him the appropriate treatment and care to overcome this situation. You strike me as an extremely caring, loving parent who's trying to be as involved and on top of any option at all that you can seek out for your son and your family and I want to congratulate you on that. Your strength of character is just amazing under very, very difficult circumstances. Thank you for all of that.

Getting back to Wood Street, when we had the presentation last Fall from the Department of Community Services, they made it quite clear that it no longer should be considered a treatment centre, it was a secure care centre. They did talk about some things that in your story I'm not sure that even that more restricted mandate is happening with Wood Street. I just want to ask your experience and your impressions about this. I certainly got the impression from the presentation last Fall that there was a very formal education component to all of this. I believe there was even mention of perhaps a couple of full-time teachers or whatever. But you're saying there's an optional hour, hour and a half education class per day.

MS. X: Right, but he can refuse, of course, to go to school, but it is there and it is offered to him and it's an hour and a half of . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And he's allowed to refuse to go when he doesn't feel like going to it?

MS. X: Right, because they can't force him to go to the classroom.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, that's very different from the impression I received as to what was going to be offered. That's interesting.

The other two things that were suggested as very definite outcomes from any stay at Wood Street would be that there would be a sort of written assessment and a written treatment plan that could be implemented by the people responsible for the youth. I'm sensing from his first stay, in particular, that there was no treatment plan and that he was sort of almost dumped into this crisis centre, Reigh Allen Centre without the staff there really knowing what they should or should not be doing to improve his situation.

MS. X: There was a discharge plan. It was faxed over on the 29th of January. It was January 9th that he was released and it was faxed over on January 29th. When he first went to Wood Street, we were told that there would be a discharge plan. I never saw that and I asked about that and I actually wrote the minister a letter outlining some of the concerns I had with his stay at Wood Street. That discharge plan did come through on January 29th.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What kinds of things - did it suggest future action, where he should be, what kind of treatment?

MS. X: To me, the discharge plan was very vague.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And you're saying it came like a week and a half after he was actually discharged?

MS. X: Right, yes. Yes, it's very vague.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So it wouldn't have been of much help to the staff at Reigh Allen in terms of building on what positive things might have come out of his stay at Wood Street?

MS. X: No, it would not. We had a meeting also and they agreed that it was very vague.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So he is now in for the third time?

MS. X: Yes.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: In terms of a discharge plan or a treatment plan, assessment, are you getting any better paperwork, anything to improve the situation, or is that staying the same?

MS. X: I have nothing. I speak with one supervisor whom I've spoken with from the beginning and I have no contact. They know we're very involved, but the social work, there's a conference . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: They know you want to be very involved, but you're not being supported?

MS. X: There's a case conference on the 16th of this month with the Family and Children's Services from Sackville and Wood Street. Sandra Miller didn't call me to tell me, I got confirmation about the meeting from Sackville Community Services, the social worker involved. There has been no contact. I know they went to court last week for an assault on a staff member at Wood Street at a prior stay. They didn't call me to tell me the outcome.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Involving your son?

MS. X: Right. He escaped the facility last week, they have a common area outside for when they go out, and I just happened to call right at that time to speak with him, it was like five minutes in between, and I left a message for him to call me back. A staff person called me back and told me that he just left the building and headed towards the highway. So I asked how that happened because the first time he left Wood Street, the first visit he got out through a

gym door. The facility manager assured me it wouldn't happen again and the problem has been rectified. So this time I said, well, how did he get out this time? They said they were out in the courtyard, and it's like a dome at the top of the courtyard, and he said he climbed the fence. So I just wanted to know more details on how he climbed the fence when there are supposed to be two staff out in that courtyard with the youth and they never called me back to give me any details on how he left, no contact at all.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I realize you don't officially have all this information, but I'm just wondering about your impressions. The first time he was in over Christmas, December and January, are you aware if there were other clients there and how fully staffed the place was? What was your impression at that time? Do you remember?

MS. X: If my memory serves me right, I think there were eight children; staff, I wouldn't know.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And the second and third time, has he ever talked about how many others might be in with him?

MS. X: He doesn't. He did make a comment last week that there were seven children.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So if it's fully staffed, then the staff-to-client ratio should be fairly good because it seems to me there was something like 20 people who were supposed to be on staff there?

MS. X: I know staff have made comments that it may be awhile before we get back to you because we are short-staffed on a couple of different occasions and, you know, it revolved around a crisis at the time. I was calling her to get an update or something, that comment was made a couple of times.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just one last question in this go-around and then we'll start in on the second round of questioning, this is the third time he has been back to Wood Street. So that in itself proves that he was not stable when he left the first or second time. Have you received any explanation - I guess I'm basically asking about the second time around - as to why they're not extending his stay, so that he's more stable when he leaves? It's not fair to ask you how many of the youth there perhaps have been extended beyond 30 days, but if they have the mandate with proper legal authority to keep a young person there up to 90 days - what explanation are they giving to you for not providing that more middle range of secure care and they're always releasing him after the shortest time possible, the 30 days?

MS. X: I was at a meeting with Sandra Miller, who is the social worker for Wood Street, and she made a statement in the meeting that - because I was asking that they make another application for him to get another certificate to stay because he was unstable - the judge would never do that. That was her remark to my question. When I did write the minister a

letter, I included that in the letter, because she can't speak for a judge; you present the case and the judge will make the decision. But that's all I could do, we could do as a family, is ask that they keep him. They go to the court to ask for the certificate, and there's no further we can take that. At the end of that meeting, it was the IWK psychologist and another team member came and they were really saying to the Wood Street program, he needs to stay here, he needs this stable environment, he can't go from here to a crisis centre.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think one thing you've mentioned several times is that he seems to respond well to some consistency and it's obvious that he has been moved around a number of times, so that's obviously not helping with any long-term solution to this.

MS. X: No, because my son does respond once he's in a structured environment. Once he gets settled and it's very structured and consistent, then he will respond to some treatment.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: David Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Ms. X, actually I don't think we've mentioned this but how old is your son?

MS. X: He just turned 15 on June 6th.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And how long has this process been, since he first started showing these aggressive signs and his behaviour increasing to the point where you tried to seek some help for him?

MS. X: Three years.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): I would like you to just tell us what you and your family, your kids, have gone through, some of the situations that your son has put you in over the years and what you had done, initially, and what has transpired in your home that stands out? I know there's a lot, but could you give us a few examples . . .

MS. X: Where do you want me to start?

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): . . . of what you've gone through. I know personally, but I would like the rest of the committee to know some of the stuff you've had to handle.

MS. X: When he was 12, he started to not go to school and to get in trouble at school, and he'd go out into the community and get in trouble, he was picked up by the police a lot. The police were very supportive to our family, which was great. Then my son became very violent in the home. He would escalate some evenings and just sit there and punch me in the face, punch his father and just keep doing it for half an hour, sometimes 45 minutes. Every

time he would be violent, I would call the police, and they would come. Some evenings they sat in our house, one evening in particular for two hours, because they couldn't take my son and hold him in their facility. They sat with us, and then sometimes they would get an emergency call and they would have to leave, and he would sometimes keep us up until 3:00 a.m. in the morning, in our kitchen area, and just hit at our walls and hit at us.

The police kept picking him up in the community for different behaviours and charging him. We would charge him when he would hit us; we would bring charges against him just to show him that that's not acceptable and we're not going to accept his behaviour. Then he went to the police department one night, they picked him up, and one of the officers went into the room with him and spoke with him. His behaviour was quite escalated at that time. He told the officer that he was going to take our lives in our sleep with a knife.

[10:00 a.m.]

The police department called us and asked us to come up and speak with him. So we went up, and he told us this. Of course, that was a big scare. He had us pretty worn down at that time, and that was just another shock for us. It was approximately two months that we were waiting for placement and a plan for what we could do with my son, with his behaviour deteriorating so badly in our home. He slept in his room, but he would get up through the night and wander through. We just became very uneasy about the situation, so we slept in our front room. When the police told us that, my husband took shifts sleeping and then I would sit up at the kitchen table and when he got up, I would go to sleep. We just started to give ourselves some strategies to cope with this until we could get some help through the community and a placement for my son.

He taunted our neighbours, and all I could say to them was phone the police. If he's doing something, I'm sorry about it but you have to phone the police. If he's harming your property or damaging it, then you will have to charge him. So they were quite understanding and supportive, to some degree. He just became more violent. I was out in the community one day, at a flea market, he was out on the run and the police were looking for him, and I ran into him. I said, son, we need to get some help here, and he up and gave me a good punch in the face that gave me a black eye and took off running. I charged him for that.

He just became more violent. For just hours upon hours, he would torment us in our home. You just had to keep it together and take it until something had to break or you just couldn't take it anymore. I became a little fearful for my little guys, they're four and five, just because of the behaviours, the violence, the outbursts. I turned to the hospital at that time and asked them for strategies on how to deal with that, what would I say to them, and their questions and answers. They told me at that time, they would see how we dealt with it and they may learn from that. Thank God, they did, because they did learn from that and how we dealt with it.

At one particular time, we had to take them out of the house to my friends in Dartmouth, just because he was very violent, and that was the week during when he would just take things and throw them at us and keep us up until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, until he literally passed out in the hallway, he was so tired. He would just keep smashing the doors. We would be sitting at the kitchen table, because we would just try to keep it together as his behaviour was escalating. He would just take his fist and just keep pounding and pounding and pounding, and spitting in his father's and my face, sometimes for half an hour straight.

Then we just started timing ourselves out. We would go outside for five minutes, each, just so that we could hold it together, and then come back, then Paul would go outside for five minutes, just so that we could keep together somehow. Then we just couldn't do it anymore. Community Services found a placement.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Could I just interrupt for a moment? Was Community Services involved from the beginning of this?

MS. X: Not at the beginning.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: But the police were?

MS. X: Right, the police were. They came one night - the police, Sergeant Scott at the Sackville RCMP Department was very involved, pretty much from day one or shortly after. The police would pick my son up, sometimes at 12:00 o'clock at night, and he's a little guy, so they would be, where are supposed to be, and then he would get in trouble and come into contact with the police. Then I would say to the police, I don't know what to do, where to go from here. We went to court one day, because he had some charges. I asked the judge, can you admit him to the IWK? He needs help and we need help as a family. Sergeant Scott went before the judge that day and asked the judge to help, and the judge said he didn't have the power to do so.

We went to the crisis centre a couple of times, at the IWK, and asked for help from them. It was nighttime, because that's when his behaviour would escalate the most, night-time. The police would say, you guys follow me in and we'll take him to the IWK. They'll have to take him, and I'm thinking, okay. So we went in, and the officer stayed with my son and us, and unless he had a plan in place right there, to take our lives or someone's life or hurt himself, then they don't admit him. We made that trip a few nights with the police, and the police became frustrated because they sat in my home and they knew what we were going through.

One night it was very severe, his behaviour was very escalated, out of control, and a member from the RCMP came, and he was there for about an hour and a half. He had to leave and he looked at us and he said I'm so sorry I have to leave, but he said I'm going to go to my trunk and get you a roll of duct tape and you have to duct tape his arms and his legs because he was so abusive and that's what happened.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So do you and your family feel safe when your son is in your home?

MS. X: Like now? Not really, no.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): You had mentioned that you had written the Minister of Community Services. What response, or did you get a response from the minister at that time?

MS. X: I did get a response from the minister. In that response Wood Street said they were going to contact me but they did not after that letter.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Have you spoken to the minister or has the minister tried to speak to you over the last little while?

MS. X: Yes, he called and left a message. I wasn't home that day and I phoned him back and he told me that the problem would be rectified. That was when we were trying to get my son into Wood Street.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And where was your son at that time?

MS. X: My son at that time was at the Airport Hotel.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Was Wood Street reluctant to take him? Before this last placement, did you have an application in to get him in previous to May 26th? Did you get a refusal for him to go back there?

MS. X: Yes, when the first application was made to go to Wood Street, yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And after he left the IWK centre, or the IWK treatment area, he was on the street, right?

MS. X: Yes.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And what was he doing on the street? Are you aware of what he was up to?

MS. X: I would get phone calls from the city police, the regional police. One evening they picked him up outside of the liquor dome in downtown Halifax and he was very intoxicated and on drugs. They took him to the IWK and they observed him for the night, but he didn't know his name or he didn't even know where he was. They observed him for the the night but he was free to go in the morning.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): He was free to go in the morning so he went back to the street?

MS. X: Right.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): So we have a 14-year-old who has been drinking, on drugs, and he was on the streets at this time?

MS. X: He came to my house one day. He had a knapsack and he brought out of his knapsack a crack cocaine pipe. So who knows what he was doing on the street?

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): And I know at that time I was in contact with you and I believe it was a Friday, it was a Wednesday night, or Wednesday evening when your son was at the IWK and he was let go on Thursday. From then until the minister, I believe, when he left a message on Friday, how long did it take before they picked up your son and placed him at the hotel, if you could, roughly?

MS. X: Sure.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Was it Friday? Did they pick him up on Friday? Did they pick him up Saturday?

MS. X: No, he didn't, sorry . . .

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): No, that's fine, that's fine. I believe it was closer to maybe Tuesday, Monday or Tuesday, I believe, is when they finally found him and they picked him up, or it might even have been later than that.

MS. X: I think it was . . .

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): It was several days?

MS. X: It was several days afterwards.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Because I know I was concerned Friday when you called and the minister was involved and it was quite a period of time before he was picked up?

MS. X: Right, yes. The application was made and Wood Street at that time said that they were full, and then at another time shortly after that said they had to hire some extra staff to deal with his behaviour. Yes, it was several days.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Well, at that same time I was speaking to the minister and the minister advised me that it wasn't full and then after I brought that to your attention some other staff members said it was a staffing issue then?

MS. X: Right.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Can you clarify something here? At this period that you're talking about, he's 14, and he's under the care and protection of the Department of Community Services?

MS. X: No, he wasn't, because he left the ACT program and once you're in the ACT program, it's totally separate, so once he left there, he was out on the street. On his own choice, to go out and do whatever.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay, so he's not in the either permanent or temporary care of the Department of Community Services?

MS. X: At that time, no. When he is in Wood Street or a placement, he's in a temporary care agreement.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Just for that specific period?

MS. X: Right.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): With this case, it's been pretty hard to try to figure out what to do to help you out. I hope we can manage to get something done over the next little while. I'm going to let the other members ask you some questions.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Gary.

MR. HINES: Thank you. How does your son interact with other children, in particular the children at home? Does his anger come out against adults more so than children his own age?

MS. X: I would say it comes out as much with children his own age as it does with adults.

MR. HINES: You stated earlier that he seemed to be responding well to the ACT program and then he signed himself out.

MS. X: The first visit, he was there twice, and when he was 12 he was there for nine months. He responded very well and had success. This time here, he knows now because he's

a little older, he's heard from other children that it's voluntary so he knew the system - all he has to do is call on a psychiatrist and then he'll be released.

MR. HINES: Do you think that should be changed? Perhaps that he couldn't just leave that program if it is working for him and indications are that it worked for him - do you think there should be a mechanism that would require him to stay there?

MS. X: Yes, because they have a very good program, the program is great.

MR. HINES: Can you tell me something about that program?

MS. X: Every minute of my son's day is structured. He's held accountable for his behaviour. Immediate consequences, as immediate as possible. Very, very structured behaviour program. I think the biggest thing is, it's very consistent amongst all staff. It's straight across, every staff member, they work together as a team and he knows there's limits, there's boundaries. It's very consistent and very structured.

MR. HINES: So he realizes that he can't manipulate that program?

MS. X: He does.

MR. HINES: I almost believe that there should be some mechanism that would require him to stay in a program that is working, if results indicate that it is working. Perhaps that's something that could be looked into.

MS. X: Yes. I know the first part of the time the doctor did get him certified, but it's seven days, I do believe. After seven days, that's the most you could do.

MR. HINES: Can he just walk out of that program or does a psychiatrist have to suggest that he can now go back to the mainstream?

MS. X: The procedure that happened was, if he requests to leave, the staff at that time have to call his psychiatrist or a psychiatrist on call and relate to the psychiatrist that this youth has asked to leave. The psychiatrist would ask the state he's in, if they have no concerns of him harming somebody or himself, yes, the psychiatrist does release him because they cannot keep or hold him unless he is certified within that seven days.

MR. HINES: So perhaps he's manipulating the psychiatrist at that point in order to be able to walk away from the facility. I would think the staff would be supportive of him staying there, realizing his violent tendencies.

MS. X: They are, but it comes down to the psychiatrist's decision.

MR. HINES: Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Jerry?

MR. PYE: Ms. X, I just want to make a general statement. First, I want to echo the comments that my other colleagues have made at this committee with respect to you coming and sharing your experiences of living with a child who has a severe behavioural and emotional problem. Primarily, your child has a severe behavioural problem - I don't know if it extends to an emotional one as well, but it's a severe behavioural problem.

[10:15 a.m.]

Although I've heard some of the very comments that you're expressing today to this committee, I find it somewhat appalling that parents are out there crying for help from the bureaucracy of government, to bring forward their particular needs, and all you ever reach is a stumbling block. There is no mechanism through jurisdictions of government to do assessments, to do analyses and to come up with a final solution to address your issue. I understand that it must be an extremely difficult experience to know that here is a 12-, 13-, 14-15-year-old child who has gone through the Shelburne centre, the Waterville centre, through the Reigh Allen Centre, through the Wood Street Centre, the whole host of services that are available, and yet no one has yet come forward with respect to providing some stability for you, your family and the child so that there is some long-term treatment going on here.

I don't know how true this is, but I heard that you've had to go through some extreme measures of refusing to accept your child because he was so unmanageable and, in fact, to get Community Services to fulfill an obligation of protecting the children of the province, and I think that in itself speaks to maybe some legislative change to the Children and Family Services Act of the province. I don't know where we go from there, but I do know that there is a real need, and the disappointment of knowing the Wood Street Secure Treatment Centre was not a long-term treatment centre, and that you looked forward to the 90-day secure treatment plans that would be available to help your child go through that process.

I do want to ask you about the discharge plan. I heard Madam Chairman mention that it was a discharge plan and I do know that in the brochure it talks about a treatment model. In the first paragraph under Treatment Model it says, "The treatment team will complete assessments and establish a new treatment plan for the client's return to their home and community." I know that the staff in there does this assessment, but are the parents, the family involved in this assessment treatment process and where do you play a role in that kind of a treatment process? After all, when the child leaves the care of the province, once they're there, the province has a responsibility to make sure that the care is provided. Once they're out of that environment, then you and the family have the responsibility of taking over the care. Do you participate in that assessment, and how active are your concerns taken with respect to that overall assessment?

MS. X: I have to honestly say I don't participate in that assessment.

MR. PYE: Do you think you should participate in that assessment?

MS. X: Yes, I do.

MR. PYE: After all, the child will be back with you.

MS. X: Right.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I just have an observation, just a couple of quick questions. It strikes me from both the story I've heard from you at a previous meeting and today that there have been individuals who have really gone beyond the call of duty in trying to help your family and support your son, but that the systems - the judicial, health and community service systems themselves - have really fallen down in meeting your son's needs. There seem to be unbelievable gaps and a lack of coordination here.

I'm really surprised, I know from personal experience there are certain medical procedures and tests that you take on an outpatient basis, where the staff will not release you unless you have family or a friend who comes over and actually comes up to the floor and picks you up and there's a drive home. Yet, here we have an underage child who can be released at night from a residential program, onto the streets. I'm just flabbergasted to think that could happen. It's unbelievable that you wouldn't have to ensure that there is a place for a youth to go if you're going to release him from a residential program. So, obviously, that's something that needs to be looked at.

It's really hard to know what else to ask you. You've certainly covered, I think, most of the basics. Is there any other information that you think might be relevant now to this situation after you've heard some of the questions and you've had a chance to reflect on it?

MS. X: Just that we really need a facility to transition into after Wood Street, even a 10-bed facility because that's usually the number at Wood Street. We need that facility because we have nowhere to go after Wood Street and we need possibly longer stays at Wood Street to get youth stabilized and include some treatment in their program.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And from your experience there hasn't been any secure treatment facility in the province that your son could go . . .

MS. X: No.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: . . . to secure care which is sort of a time out, stabilize, and do the initial assessment, but all the other options that you've been involved with, none of them

seem to provide secure treatment, the youth or patients can sign themselves out, everything is voluntary, all those other options?

MS. X: Through Mental Health, that's voluntary, the ACT program, that's voluntary.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: What about Reigh Allen, is that through Community Services or Health?

MS. X: It's Community Services.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Right, but there wasn't secure treatment there? I mean he could wander in and out any time of the night or day, right?

MS. X: He can just leave. On his choice, he can just take off from Reigh Allen, yes. They don't have the means to restrain him and keep him there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Does anyone else have a question for Ms. X? Stephen.

MR. MCNEIL: Just one and it's just really pertaining to your other children. Is there any support for your other children? I'm sure this has obviously been very disruptive in your lives and how this is impacting on them. Has Community Services provided you any support or provided your other two children any support?

MS. X: We worked with the community-based intensive treatment program from the IWK and he was our support and still is our support person, and he's from Mental Health.

MR. MCNEIL: If you don't mind me asking, how are your other two children coping? They're a relatively young age.

MS. X: I have to say they're coping very well, very well.

MR. MCNEIL: Wonderful. Thanks for coming.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think David has one more question.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): I just want to thank you again for coming in because I know it's hard, especially coming in front of strangers and explaining what's going on, and I want to commend you on being the one who seems to be coming out and expressing the situation your family has gone through. I mean I'm sure it's difficult to come out and say that you're afraid of your own child and some of the situations you've gone through. Just a quick question on your two other kids. How are they doing? Have they shown any signs of the same problems?

MS. X: None, no.

MR. DAVID WILSON (Sackville-Cobequid): Again, thank you for coming in, Ms. X.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes, thank you so much, Ms. X. As everyone has said, this has not been an easy time for you and you've done a wonderful service, not only to your son, but I think to other families who are struggling with the systems and just don't know where to go for help and are falling through the cracks. I think you're voicing concerns, using a specific example, that we've heard off and on since Wood Street opened and, hopefully, you know, we can work with the department and the staff there to improve the services so that Wood Street does become the facility that meets more of the needs of our youth in crisis in this province. So we thank you very much and I just want to remind the media that in no way should Ms. X or her son be able to be identified by name or image.

MR. PYE: Madam Chairman, can I just ask you one question? With respect to this committee meeting, will there be minutes?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Yes. The names will be blocked out.

MR. PYE: And the Department of Community Services will see those minutes so that they can see the comments and some of the suggestions that might have been brought forward at this meeting.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any other business the committee members want to bring forward? Just a reminder then that our All-Day Forum on Family Violence is going to be in the Red Room at Province House on Thursday, June 24th. We encourage everyone to have full caucus representation at that meeting. We have a number of different groups coming in to do presentations and discuss these issues with us. They're really looking forward to that opportunity. I encourage everyone to come, or at least find a replacement from their caucus. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 10:26 a.m.]